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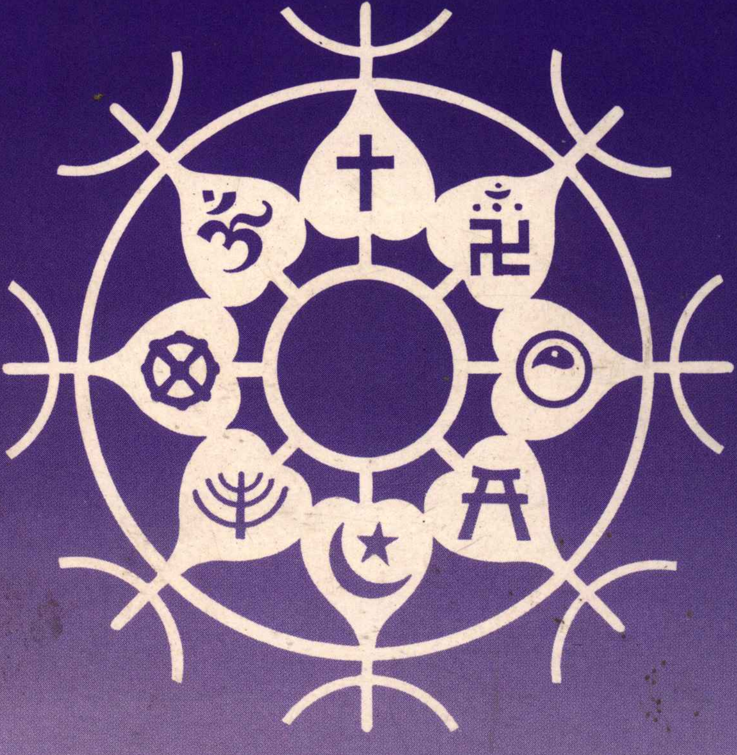

PRAYER IN WORLD RELIGIONS

October-December 2003 Vol. XXVIII, No. 4

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Editorial

PRAYER IN WORLD RELIGIONS

Religion, as its etymological origin indicates, is basically a human device to establish and nurture holistic relationships at the vertical as well as horizontal dimensions. Taking the existential nature of the involvement of religions in the life of their followers, it is obvious that nothing can be outside the sphere of their activity. If establishment and maintenance of relationship are central to religion, any religious activity should have its unique characteristic mark in terms of the ability to cater to this central mission.

Prayer is one of the most important activities of religion. Irrespective of the nature of the Absolute that different religions subscribe to and worship, irrespective of the variations in the emphasis on the horizontal or vertical dimension among religions, and irrespective of any barbaric or demonic nature ascribed to the understanding of the Absolute in one religion by the followers of another, all religions seem to fall in the same track when it comes to the need of prayer in matters related to the life of the persons who subscribe to their creeds. Although prayer may take different forms depending on the need and circumstance, culture and tradition, personality traits and communal identity, the dynamics of prayer centre around a constant attempt to initiate, nurture, culture, and blossom healthy relationships between the religious devotee and the Absolute, or/and among the devotees themselves. Indeed, especially in the case of the theistic religions, authentic prayer is said to have a necessary orientation towards or relationship to the divine Absolute, which, in turn, would give rise to the same in relation to the others.

Prayer, thus, can be understood as a human mechanism to realize the core of religion. While it is possible to find vast variations in the methods of prayer adopted by different religions and individual members within a particular religion itself, it is essential that any prayer form in order to be effective and valid, it should be capable of opening up the devotee to something or somebody (with or without a name, or even in terms of the *nothing* or *void*) other than the self itself. It is here that we come across with the transcendental dimension in prayer. The self is capable of transcending itself so that a relationship can be established; the shell of selfishness is removed so that the self can attain the capacity to open itself up in transcendence, either a vertical transcendence (towards the divine) or even a horizontal one (towards the human), for that matter. It must be borne in mind that in most of the world religions, it is the vertical transcendence, a transcendence that can establish a contact between the human devotee and the divine Absolute, that is considered to be strictly religious prayer. At the same time, however, from the perspective of the central role of prayer as a mechanism to establish relationship among the members of any particular religion or, better, among the members of various religions, its horizontal dimension is also of essential importance.

The vast and rich experiences of different religions have given rise to different traditions of prayer depending mostly on their understanding and approach to the Absolute. Indeed, some of them have stressed the vertical to the exclusion of the horizontal dimension. However, if we analyse different periods in the development of the religious thought we find that the emphasis always oscillated from time to time or from people to people between these two extremes. At times we also find the beautiful blending of both in a very meaningful and holistic manner. Given the fact that there are numerous methods of prayer among the living religions, with varying degrees of effectiveness, it is unbecoming of a believer to brand a prayer tradition of another person as ineffective and *demonic*, especially when the former has never had any knowledge or experience of the religious perspective and tenets of the other.

The methods of prayer, having their foundation in the tradition of any particular religion, do require a great deal of proximity to the cultural patterns and living situations of the believing community, an absence of which will certainly make them obsolete, at least as far as initiating and catering to the central mission of religions, that is the establishment of relationships. It is necessary that the internal dynamics of such prayer methods are suitable and capable of enkindling the flame of a warm bond between the devotees and the Absolute and among the devotees themselves. However, danger lurks in any attempt of religions if they, or any segment of the believers, tend to absolutize the external form of a prayer tradition at the exclusion of all others, sometimes endangering the very spirit and spontaneity of the religious adherents. It is highly probable that over-emphasis accorded to the peripheral elements would gradually take away the dynamic inner spirit of any religious practice, including prayer, thus tending to make the latter irrelevant and meaningless to the persons of the living era. From this perspective, there is no point in blaming the lack of interest among the present generations in the traditional forms of prayer, which have been the product of the bygone ages. This is not a call to throw away all traditional forms of prayer, but a call to make them effective by retaining the valid inner spirit of religious practices, by restructuring, reforming and renewing traditions of prayer, and even attempting to pattern new but effective forms of prayer in the present-day times. The index of any effective prayer tradition shall be its continued and increasing capacity to bring about and creatively maintain divine-human and human-human relationships. What is primarily required for this purpose, therefore, is an openness towards the divine spirit and human existence. Openness of this sort has to begin from the interior of the individual, which shall gradually pervade the whole community of believers, thus making religious transcendence a reality for all. Although human effort seems to be at the beginning of the whole process, many religious traditions maintain that a response from and an accompaniment of the divine in the whole process are necessary for its successful employment.

Thus, from the perspective of world religions, prayer is an integral aspect of the realization of religious ideal. Its existential dimension indicates that a continued attention to various prayer forms and their dynamics would pave the way for a healthy religious perspective, where, although one or the other form would be preferred by individual devotees or groups, the uniqueness and value of the others would not be denied and looked down upon. It is with this hope that this issue of the *Journal of Dharma* addresses the general theme "Prayer in the World Religions." Deeply religious scholars from different disciplines, mostly from a Christian perspective, approach the issues involved in prayer, delving into its inner recesses so that an effective and healthy approach could be articulated and maintained among different religions.

Attempting to describe prayer as a human endeavour to establish relationship with the Divine, as the finite trying to reach out to the infinite, Thomas Kalam scrutinizes various prayer forms which fail to be authentic and tend to be merely narcissistic approaches: some unauthentic prayer forms as attempts to create and worship God in our human image, whereby the relationship established tends to be only with oneself. Emphasizing the role of silence in authentic prayer, he proposes: "Integrating life and faith seems to be the best way to escape from narcissistic prayer." Moreover, he insists on the mutuality and relationship that result from any authentic prayer form saying that "The more open people are to this Transcendent God, the more united they become with one another."

Kurian Kachappilly, in his paper "Prayer as a Fundamental and Personal Religious Act," offers a critical reflection on William James' working definition of religious experience as "the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men (and women) in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine." Rejecting the view that prayer requires God merely as a presupposition, he contends that "the affirmation of God's existence is essential to the actual life of religion, to an authentic life of faith and love in action."

Highlighting the need of a name in the human endeavours to relate to the Absolute, and drawing on the Indian traditions of *nāma-saṁkīrtana* and *nāmajapa*, Subhash Anand unveils the rich lore of chanting the name/s of God, so that an effective, warm and permanent relationship is established between the devotee and the Absolute, though the name and form may change from devotee to devotee, or from tradition to tradition. Thus, according to him, "A person, deeply in love, constantly thinks of his beloved, even when the beloved is absent, or when he himself is involved in some work. Constant *nāmajapa* is possible if the aspirant grows in love for the Lord. Continuous *nāmajapa* is the articulation of a mind that is fixed on the Lord, and, therefore, a man who in life constantly thinks of the Lord, can hope to die with the name of the Lord on his lips." In another article, "Jesus Prayer and Stillness of Heart," by James Aerthayil, we find the importance of almost the same style of prayer in the Eastern Christian traditions. Insisting that these prayer "methods are not merely a mechanical technique to achieve a certain spiritual condition," Aerthayil holds that "the heart [becomes] ready for the permanent indwelling of grace by constantly guarding its interior purity," and continued recitation of Jesus Prayer.

Antony Mookenthottam, an expert in Indian as well as Christian thought, in his article, makes a thorough investigation into the Hindu and Buddhist prayer traditions and arrives at the most salient features of them, thus, bringing forth the dynamics of prayer as such. He contends that whatever be the form, prayer should lead us to a profound experience of God or the ultimate Reality and a concern for the other, thus, paving the way for the realization of universal love, harmony and compassion as the common goals of all religions.

In another well-researched article, "The 'Lord's Prayer' and the Dynamics of Christian Living" by Paul Savio Pudussery, we find the clear articulation of the various dynamics of Christian prayer as reflected in the Lord's Prayer. In a very effective manner he arrives at his conclusion that "Only when we are in right relationship with God and with our neighbour, we could pray the Lord's Prayer in an authentic and meaningful way" and, thus, acknowledge "the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of humanity." Another article from the Christian tradition is "Prayers of Jesus in the Gospel of John as Paradigms." Drawing on the three major prayers of Jesus in the Gospel of John to propose a paradigm for Christian prayer forms, Antony Edanad highlights Jesus' self-awareness and the intimacy, and the resulting confidence and total openness to *the Other and others* that should be part of any Christian prayer. He also maintains that the prayers of Jesus never have a self-oriented interest, instead they are always meant "for the well-being and benefit of others. Even when he seemingly asks something for himself, such as glory, it is ultimately intended for furthering the divine plan" in relation to the whole humanity. In another survey, demonstrating the importance and power of prayer in the Acts of the Apostles, and developing the communitarian dimension of prayer, Ignatius Jesudasan holds that "Our very prayer is too narrowly individualistic. The more we possess and privatise, the less can we feel the power of the spirit of Christ and of his resurrection, which heals the sick, as a sign of greater things to come."

All our contributors have delved deep into the dynamics of prayer from different perspectives, especially those of the living world religions, and have clearly shown that it is an inherent and inevitable element of the religious phenomena. The renewed interest of the *elites* in some of the traditional prayer techniques, like yoga and meditation, seems to be certainly a welcome one in containing the stress and strain associated with the modern living. The contemporary movements like the New Age Religions, and the positive thrust of the secular, industrial and business societies seem to be very much in tune with the dynamics of prayer, although they may not be strictly *religious* according to the traditional standards. However, a healthy approach to prayer shall clearly be an effective index of a healthy and living religion. Indeed, religion devoid of relationship – to the Absolute and to the fellow human beings – is no religion, and prayer that does not cater to the establishment and maintenance of relationships shall be considered as *dead* prayer. As religion is the need of humanity, and as every living and genuine religious phenomenon is the need of the time, what is to be welcomed at this juncture is the constant attempt on the part of religions to inculcate and perpetuate relevant and effective means of prayer, thus becoming the catalyst of life lived in relationship to its fullness.

Saju Chackalackal
Chief Editor, JD

Journal of Dharma 28, 4 (October-December 2003), 417-426

NARCISSISM IN PRAYER

Thomas Kalam[♦]

1. Prayer: Authentic and Unauthentic

Prayer as a human endeavour may be described as an attempt of the human to get in touch with the Divine – the finite reaching out to the Infinite. As such it can be analysed and understood from a psychological point of view, though the Divine itself transcends any psychological scrutiny.

From this perspective one can describe prayer as authentic and unauthentic. If in this attempt that one describes as prayer, the human is reaching out to the really Divine, then prayer could be considered as authentic. If, on the other hand, what is reached out by the finite consciousness is not the really Divine, but something else, that prayer becomes unauthentic.

The perennial danger in prayer is the possibility of human mind reaching out to something less than the Divine and considering it as the Ultimate.

2. Reaching Out to Oneself or the Ultimate?

This is something like what happened to Narcissus in Greek mythology. Narcissus goes for a stroll in the woods with his girl friend Echo. They come near a still lake in the midst of the woods. Handsome Narcissus looks into the still waters of the lake and encounters a beautiful 'creation' standing there in the lake. Little does he realize that it is his own shadow, his own reflection! Narcissus becomes so convinced that the figure seen in the waters of the lake is that of the beautiful Goddess Nymph. He wants to reach her then and there. Echo cries out to him: "Narcissus, that is not any goddess, it is your own shadow." But poor Narcissus is so convinced that it is Nymph herself. In order to reach her, he jumps into the lake and dies in his own shadow.

[♦] **Dr. Thomas Kalam,** a well-versed and popularly sought-after moral theologian and psychologist, trained in Rome, Dublin, Lancaster and Harvard, is presently the Director of St. John's National Academy of Medical Sciences, Bangalore.

The modern Narcissus enters the solitude of his/her chapel, temple, prayer room or ashram, and in the stillness of that atmosphere, discovers Him whom his/her soul was longing for. Little does he/she realize that what is perceived there is often his/her own shadow. Prayer thus becomes a response, not to God, but to the image one has of God. God is supposed to be one's creator. One's image of God is, however, one's own creation. This image is often a reflection of one's own personality. In the beginning God created us in His own image, says the Bible. Today some of us seem to be returning that favour by creating God in our own image!

3. Narcissistic Prayer: Source of Intolerance

Spiritual Narcissism thus seems to be the greatest obstacle for a life of prayer. It is the root cause of the basic intolerance often visible among the so-called 'prayerful' persons. God is the source of unity. In real prayer one is united with 'the all.' The essence of all mysticism is this union with the all. In narcissistic prayer, one is united with oneself, one's own image of God, and estranged from others, especially others who are different. This kind of prayer begets fanaticism and fundamentalism and leads to intolerance.

Suppose that one person's image of God is that of an Almighty Power, and of another person's, that of a benevolent parent. The style of their prayer will be entirely different. The prayer to the Almighty Power God will be characterized by dignity, decorum and protocol, whereas the prayer to the Daddy-God will be one of informality and intimacy. These two persons can become intolerant of the other person's style of prayer. This intolerance often leads to attempts at spiritual conquests of other minds and a sort of spiritual colonialism. As the Bible says: "No man has seen God at any time..." (John 1:18). Claiming that one's image or idea of God is the only valid and exhaustive one is an expression of utmost spiritual arrogance; imposing it on others an expression of worst spiritual domination.

Prayer, many a time, instead of reaching out to the real God, ends in one's small image of God.

4. Tainted Images of God

It is true that no human being can relate to God without at the same time having a mental image of God. It seems to be a legitimate prerogative of human existence. The trouble begins when one equates the reality of the Divine exclusively with one's puny image of God.

It is self-evident that one's image of God is often coloured by one's own history. A person who has had strained relationship with his/her father, may not like to think of God as a 'father'. If at all he/she has to address God as a Father, it is likely that God will be described as a 'different type of Father'. A male chauvinist would shudder at the thought of God being described as a mother. As the Hindu theology postulates, each person will have his/her own '*ishtadevata*' (the favourite image of God.) Problem arises only when this image is absolutized and universalised to the extent that anything different is considered to be totally erroneous.

5. Scriptural Images of God

Scriptures of different religions do describe God in different ways. To the extent that a person accepts these images, he/she belongs to that religion. A member of a particular religion has to verify if his/her image of God corresponds to that offered by the Sacred Scriptures of that religion. Even within that religion, there may be different images of God and consequently an option to choose one of them. Depending on the type of image chosen by the individual, the spirituality of the person would be different even within the same religion. Consequently, there are different types of spiritualities in all religions which must be appreciated.

Even these images proposed by the Scriptures cannot be absolutized as exhaustive and comprehensive descriptions of the Deity. They are all human descriptions about the Divine - human attempt to express the ineffable. Scriptures are God's words translated into human words. They have their limitations coming from limitations of human existence.

Suppose that a man born blind would like to know how the 'blue skies,' look like. It would be impossible to describe the experience of beholding the vast expanse of the blue skies in visual terms to this man. If we can translate that experience into something he can comprehend in auditory terms, it may be possible to describe that experience to him at least to an extent: "Beholding the blue skies is like listening to 'soft music,' one can assure him. Experience of listening to soft music is part of the blind person's repertoire. This comprehension is evidently a limited one, and it is analogical. Suppose he absolutizes it? What will happen if he gains his sight all of a sudden? Will he be able to recognize the blue skies above his head? He would probably fail to recognize the blue skies because he will be still looking for 'soft music.' He has identified the blue skies with soft music. He forgets the important word '*like*': "blue skies are *like* soft music," and they cannot be identified.

Similarly, the Sacred Scriptures seem to be using analogical terms to describe the ineffable Divine. When the Scriptures describe God as a 'Father,' 'Mother,' 'good shepherd,' 'rock,' 'atman,' etc., we should understand that it is analogical language: God is *like* a father, mother, good shepherd, rock, etc. People who argue about the sexual identity of the Almighty and quarrel about addressing the Almighty as father or as mother are oblivious of the fact that God is neither a father nor a mother, but *like* them. If we forget the important word *like* and begin to equate God with these descriptions, it would be like the blind man equating blue skies with soft music. As a result, it would be difficult for them to experience God except in their own terms and according to their fantasies. The young student of philosophy who is convinced that God is "pure being" is unlikely to have any God experience in this world, because in a world where even the mother's milk is adulterated with DDT it would be difficult to encounter any "pure being" anywhere.

If the image one fosters in one's heart, however, is in tune with the various images of the Divine warranted by the Sacred Scriptures, one may be sure of being on the right track of thinking about God. However, even those images have their limitations in representing the Divine.

There is an ancient Indian saying: "When the wise man points at the moon with his finger, the fool sees the wise man's finger." Similarly, when the Sacred Scriptures point to the Divine, often people get stuck with the images used, instead of going beyond them in search of the Divine.

The Second Lateran Council of the Church in the 12th century made a very meaningful statement in this connection when it said: "The image that we have of God is more unlike God than like God." The starting point of all relationship with the Divine should be this realization.

6. Images as Idols

According to Paul Tillich, idolatry exists there, where the ultimate concern is placed on penultimate realities. Image of the Ultimate too belongs to the category of the penultimates. Worship of that image is tantamount to idolatry. Prayer that centres around the image of God, and not on God, is a form of idolatry. In idolatry, the human being becomes enslaved by a finite object which is given the status of the Ultimate. It is the human mind which forms the image of God. It is the creation of a human being not his/her creator. When it is given the status of the Ultimate, the human being becomes enslaved by the product of his/her own creation. Thus one becomes alienated from oneself. Prayer should lead one to integration and not to alienation.

7. Theology: Fantasies of the Theologian?

Prayer can become degraded into a sort of reaching out to glorified projections of one's own self. Theologies can become commentaries on the fantasies of theologians. When treading into the realm of the Divine, one has to remove the footwear from ones feet – so that the real Divine, which surpasses and transcends the equations of the puny human mind, is not trampled upon.

The Indian thinker J. Krishnamurthy once observed that the day we teach a child the name of a bird, that day we have interfered with its ability to enjoy it. Before the child knew the name of the bird, it was filled with wonderment and admiration at the sight of the bird. It could not take its eyes away from the attractive creature. Once the name of the bird is known, there is no need for looking at the bird anymore. The bird can be dealt with as a mere concept. From the time God is transformed into a concept, an image, there is no need for searching the Divine in reality! Once the Divine is encapsulated in a theological concept, there is no need of searching for him, experiencing him! Such a theology becomes an obstacle for the spiritual experience of the theologian!

This must have been one of the main reasons why image worship was strictly forbidden in monotheistic religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The moment the Divine is depicted in the form of an image or name, it becomes a commodity that is in the custody of the person who possesses it. In a world where God is identified with any finite image, everything else becomes mundane and of little value. The predilection of psychologists like Erich Fromm for the Buddhist version of monotheism is because of its refusal to depict the Transcendent not as a God, but as a Goal – *sūnya*. The Transcendent Ultimate should not be equated with some limited concept of human imagination.

8. Silence: An Authentic Path to God

The ancient sages of India known as *munis* were people who experienced God. The medium through which they tried to understand God was *mouna* – silence. This silence does not refer to exterior silence or absence of noise. Rather it points to one's ability to go beyond one's own images, concepts and convictions about God in search of the real God. It presupposes one's realization of the fact that one is limited and one's understanding cannot exhaust the reality of the Ultimate. Interior silence demands humility – humility to acknowledge that one's understanding of the Absolute is not absolute. It is in one's attempt to transcend one's own fantasies and convictions that one seems to experience the genuinely Divine.

All great thinkers and mystics acknowledge this fact. Thomas Aquinas, it is said, could not complete the fourth volume of his *Summa*, because, it seems, he had a rare God-experience during that stage of life. The only thing he could write after that experience is said to be: "All that I have written about God is mere straw." The *via negativa* of knowing God seems to be one of the purest ways of knowing God – the *neti, neti* ("not this, not this") approach of the Hindu theology. Mystics knew that they can experience God only through "the Cloud of Unknowing." St. Paul stated clearly: "For now we see things in a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now my knowledge is in part; then it will be complete..." (I Cor 13: 12).

Perhaps the greatest obstacle for us reaching the real God may be our theologies themselves. In the pages of the Bible we see some theologians called Pharisees looking forward to the coming of a Messiah. They claimed to be 'experts' on Yahweh and His Messiah with very clear understanding of their nature and all the nuances of the working of the Divine. But when the Messiah finally arrived, as we see in the Infancy narratives in the Gospels, they were the ones who failed to recognize the Messiah in the babe lying in the manger in swaddling clothes. This Messiah apparently did not correspond himself to their theologies! The only people who could recognize the Messiah in that babe were some poor shepherds in the field, who did not know much 'theology,' Mary His Mother, who was a silent woman, and the real wise men from the East, who still looked for stars in heaven. Only a silent mind may be open to the ineffable, overwhelming reality of the Divine. A silent mind is one which is necessarily empty and capable of receiving the all enriching Divine irrupting into it.

9. Silence: The Milieu of Divine Encounter

In any interpersonal relationship, respect for the transcendence, the otherness of the other is important. Once this basic respect disappears, one becomes an object possessed by the partner. This applies to prayer as well. The basic otherness and transcendence of the mystery that the Divine is, must be safeguarded in prayer relationship too. In a healthy relationship the mystery aspect of the other is always respected. The other thus remains a subject with which another subject interacts.

Some persons experience 'ecstasy' while in prayer, and 'agony' when they are back in the stream of life. Prayer which unites one with one's own 'shadow' could be very consoling and soothing experience – but it is unreal. Prayer which invites one to be united with the Divine in the stream of life could be a challenge. It is a challenge to rise from the slumber of existence into the full blossoming of life. Every challenge is painful, though rewarding. Therefore, there is a tendency to avoid accepting the challenge and to take refuge in a sort of prayer which is a form of escapism.

10. Stream of Life: Acid Test for Authenticity

Integrating life and faith seems to be the best way to escape from narcissistic prayer. Instead of creating a convenient God in the ghetto of one's imagination, it would be more salutary to seek the Divine in the stream of life. In the former approach, God becomes a creation of human imagination. In the latter approach, God is the master of one's destiny and future. The stream of one's life is not the creation of one's own imagination or fantasy. It is one of the 'givens' of life. Searching the Divine and relating to the Ultimate in that context helps integration of life and prayer. This contact with the reality of life seems to be the best norm for discerning the authenticity of any prayer experience.

John in his First Letter recommends this approach of discernment of the Divine Spirit. The question there is how to discern if a spiritual experience is genuinely Divine. People were claiming Divine inspiration to all sorts of exotic experiences they were having. Some of them were clearly divisive and destructive. How to distinguish which of these is genuinely from the Spirit of God? John suggests an acid test for discerning the Divine nature of spiritual experiences: "My loved ones, do not put your faith in every spirit, but put them to the test to see if they are from God... By this you may have knowledge of the Spirit of God: every spirit which says that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God." (1 John 4:1-2) The place to search for Jesus Christ, the revelation of God, is not in some exotic experiences, but in the 'flesh' of human history. Contact with the down to earth reality, the flesh, of human history is the acid test for discerning the authenticity of the Spirit.

Any God-experience which is not intimately related to the flesh of one's life commitment, one's history, should be, therefore considered to be unreal, illusory or narcissistic. Any prayer which becomes an obstacle to the duties of one's life commitment should be considered an escapism. As a result of reaching out to the Divine in the context of one's life and its commitments, the quality of that life itself enhances. Then there is very little danger of narcissism in prayer. The God one meets in this type of prayer is not one's own creation, but one's Creator. This God beckons us from the comforts of "Ūr of Chaldees" to a more exciting and challenging world of unimaginable blessings, as in the case of Abraham in the Book of Genesis (Gen 15:7).

11. Life Affirming Prayer

There are different types of coping mechanisms in the context of the frustrations of life. Some of them are constructive and life-affirming; others are attempts of escaping these challenges. A life of prayer, which is not at all related to one's life-commitments, one's struggles in life, is such an expression of escapism. Like alcohol and drugs, this type of prayer too works as a narcotic for the time being. This type of 'prayer-holism' in the long run becomes more counterproductive in coping with life and its tensions. Alcoholics becoming converted to 'prayer-holics' cannot be considered as a genuine conversion. It is transition from one addiction to another addiction. Contact with the Divine in the context of one's life commitment seems to be the antidote for this addiction.

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayer was one of integrating life and faith – of meeting His God in the midst of the trials and tribulations expecting him in the course of fulfilling his mission. He did not go to the solitude of that Garden to escape from those challenges by entering into some fantasy exercises, but on the contrary, to prepare himself to face them.

Viewed from this perspective, the so-called 'distractions' during prayer should be considered as something salutary. A closer analysis of the 'distractions' would prove that often these are related to one's duties and commitments in life or part of the tensions and challenges one faces actually. They may be considered as invitations to relate faith to day-to-day life. It must be 'messages' or 'messengers' from God. They may not correspond to our ideas or expectations about the Divine. So the tendency is to dismiss them and stay with one's own project and designs. For a real contemplative, the so-called 'distractions' are cues for prayer. Avoiding them and 'concentrating' on one's own mental projects may be the best way to avoid encounter with the Divine whose revelation takes place through these day to day realities of life. Carlo Carretto's contention in his book *Desert in the City* to see farmers and mothers as role models for real prayer is pertinent here. The worries of the farmer are simmering at the back of his mind even when he is at prayer. He will be looking into the skies to see if it is going to rain. A mother will never be able to concentrate on 'beatific vision' forgetting her baby or household chores even when she is at prayer. It is only people who are irresponsible and who have no sense of responsibility in life who can get immersed in the so called 'heavenly' realities and forget the tensions and worries of life, and one's commitments and duties to people in their lives. In the life of Jesus we always see that even when he is at prayer in lonely places, his attention is, for instance, on the boat in which his disciples are facing a storm. One must go to secret places to pray in order to come back to the market place and meet one's God there.

12. Authentic Prayer: Letting God and Living Together

In trying to reach out to God in prayer, the best bet therefore is to reach out to the ineffable as ineffable, the unimaginable as unimaginable. All the props one uses in this process, such as various concepts and images, must necessarily be considered as just 'props.' It is better to use them as a tent for one night's rest on one's pilgrimage. Any attempt settle down in any of them forever and exclusively is futile. Instead of a tent on one's pilgrimage, they are likely to become our tombs (J. Balfour)! The best image we can dream up of the Divine is still far short of the reality of the Transcendent God.

The more open people are to this Transcendent God, the more united they become with one another. The more we cling to our own petty images of God, the more estranged we become from one another. The images of others do not necessarily tally with those of ours. Especially it is true of different religious traditions. The more this search for the Divine takes place in *mouna,* in interior silence, the more the religions are likely to coexist peacefully with one another. God unites, idols and images divide. The role of each religious tradition is to help its adherents to go beyond these images they propose regarding the Divine into real *mouna* where the real Divine can be experienced and where all become one in that experience.

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PRAYER AS FUNDAMENTAL AND PERSONAL RELIGIOUS ACT

A Philosophical Inquiry

Kurian Kachappilly◆

1. Introduction

The advent of William James (1842-1910) on the American scene marked a turning point in the approach to Philosophy of Religion. His preparation of the essays, *The Will To Believe* (1897) and *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), was guided by the conviction that the significance of a belief should be judged not by its "sources, but by its fruits."[1] The result was a massive change of emphasis from an almost exclusive involvement with dogma and the external forms of religion to a sympathetic and respectful concern for the religious experience and its most fundamental and personal act, prayer.

2. Common Content of Religions

Prayer, for James, is "the very soul and essence of religion."[2] Prayer is religion in act, and without prayer religion would be merely external, like a body without soul. It is prayer that distinguishes religious phenomenon from similar phenomena as purely moral or aesthetic sentiment; and, for Saint

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[1] This conviction itself was rooted in James' philosophy of 'pragmatism'. For James, 'pragmatism' is primarily an attitude of mind, which expresses itself in the form of a method. The briefest and most comprehensive formula for the method is "the attitude of looking away from first things, principles and categories; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, and facts." See, John Dewey, "What does pragmatism mean by practical?" *The Journal of Philosophy* 5,4 (1908), 85.

[2] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, New York: Dolphin Books, 1902, 404.

Thomas, "prayer is more perfect than any other acts of religion."[3] However, James' approach to prayer in the context of religion is different from that of tradition and scriptures. According to him, any attempt to determine the nature of prayer/religion will necessarily involve an analysis of religious experience – which, in turn, involves an analysis of human needs and urges, which cause the religious sense to arise. He, therefore, advocates an empirical approach, an approach of analysing the religious responses present in wo/man than the phenomenon of religion as such.

a. Prayer as petition

According to James, such an analysis of religious experience would reveal that religion necessarily contains two factors: "a).An uneasiness, and b) Its solution."[4] The uneasiness is an awareness of the fact that "there is *something wrong about us* as we naturally stand," and the solution consists in the realization "that *we are saved from the wrongness* by making proper connection with the higher powers."

James feels that these two aspects of religion – namely, the feeling that there is "something wrong" with individuals and their lives in the society, and that this can be put right through a 'relationship with higher powers'- can be described as the "common content" in which religions appear to meet. A religious philosophy, for James, therefore, must be based on an apprehension of this common content of all religions.

The prayer of primitive men and women (as in animism) arose from concrete environmental needs in which the vital interests – either of the individual or the community – were at stake, and it was mostly directed toward material objectives. Longing for delivery from their predicaments, primitive men and women turned to higher, mightier beings, through religious and magical rites and ceremonies. To make them yield to their desires, they used every means of persuasion – praise, adoration, thanksgiving, allurement, flattery, apology, lamentation, etc.

A survey of the aetiology of the origin of religions would also reveal this common content of religious experience. Popular Hinduism was concerned with the problem of *samsāra*, the bondage of birth and rebirth, whereas the intellectual Hinduism addressed the question of *avidya*

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[3] Saint Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Blackfriars, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970, 2a 2ae, 83.3.

[4] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 508.

(ignorance or illusion). In Judaism, the cause for the 'feeling of uneasiness' was slavery in Egypt: "I have observed the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cry. I have come down to deliver them" (Ex 3:7-8). Buddhism – whether a way of life or religion – was a response to the fact of human suffering (*duḥkha*) – sufferings of old age, sickness and death.

Hence, the commonest form of prayer was the *petitionary* prayer, which was concerned with human well-being – material, social, psychic or spiritual. As a matter of fact, the English word 'prayer', which is derived from the Latin verb *precari*, means literally a 'petition' or 'request'. Although the word may be used to mean a petition made to anyone, in its customary use, it stands for a petition made to God or some holy person reigning with God. Some prayers contain, in place of a petition, an outpouring of our emotions of praise, joy, or gratitude. Even when petition is not the central activity, it is always implicit in any kind of prayer to God. Prayer as petition is what Levinas calls, "a religion of needs" whose core is a sort of sacred egoism.[5] However, such a religion is nevertheless an expression of human reality, insofar as the human being recognizes that it is itself finite and, therefore, seeks to relate to a 'higher' and 'extraordinary' power.

b. Prayer as communion

Petitionary prayer, for James, is only one department of prayer. Hence, he uses the word 'prayer' in the wide sense as meaning "every kind of inward communion or conversation with the power recognized as divine."[6] Accordingly, religion is described as "an intercourse, a conscious and voluntary relation, entered into by a soul in distress with the mysterious power upon which it feels itself to depend, and upon which its fate is contingent."[7]

James' description of prayer, in this wider sense, is very much similar to that of tradition and scriptures. Tradition tries to define prayer as an "ascent to God," and scriptures speak of "pouring out the soul before the Lord" (I Sam 1:5), of longing for God as "a deer longs for flowing streams" (Ps 42:1), and of "lifting up the soul" (Ps 25:1). Here we may recall two classical definitions of prayer: (a) "Speaking to God or Christ" (which has been a spontaneous description of prayer since the Apostolic Fathers)[8] and (b) "the lifting up of the mind to God" (*Oratio est ascensus mentis in Deum*), which is generally attributed to John Damascene.[9]

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[5] Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. A. Lingis, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1987, 38-39.

[6] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 464.

[7] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 464.

At this juncture, it may be argued that the particular task, which humans themselves have to perform, is to construct a fresh understanding and practice of petitionary prayer corresponding to the type of relationship we enjoy with God. Only then petitionary prayer in the concrete can avoid being a "troubling of the gods" and be really prayer to God, when it consists in that opening of the heart so as to respond to the inconceivability of God. In the words of Levinas, "far from being a demand addressed to God, prayer consists in the elevation, surrender and *adherence* of the soul to the heights."[10] James' working definition of religion, perhaps, provides us with such a fresh understanding and strong impetus for practice of prayer/religion.

3. An Analysis of the Definition of Religion

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James defines religion as "the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men [and women] in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine."[11]

a. A total reaction/response

The initial reference to "feelings, acts and experiences" reflects the many dimensions of human life that are involved in religious experience. James, in his definition, gives due regard to all the aspects of our mental life: cognitive, affective and conative. He was aware that religion would comprehend certain cognitions, involve certain types of feelings and express itself in certain conduct and behaviour. It implies a 'total reaction', a total commitment of the self to the object considered to be the 'divine'.

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[8] Karl Rahner, *The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, New York: The Seaburry Press, 1975, 1268. *Imitation of Christ* (II. 8) offers also a simple description of prayer as "the great art of conversing with Jesus."

[9] *Patrologiae Graecae Tomus*, vol. 94, 1086.

[10] Emmanuel Levinas, "Prayer Without Demand," in Sean Hand, ed. *The Levinas Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1989, 232-33.

[11] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 31.

It also implies a sense of *absolute dependence* on the object of religious experience, for one would not commit her/himself to that object, if s/he could live independently of it. In brief, when wo/man relates to God, the whole person – the intellect, the will and the emotions all play a part. Prayer, thus, becomes a fitting worship to God, which has been interpreted by Hartshorne as "loving God with all one's heart and all one's mind and all one's soul and all one's strength."[12]

However, feeling, for James, is the most important ingredient of religious experience. By "feeling" he does not mean a sense of "pleasantness or unpleasantness," but he uses the term to denote "the state of being affected by the cognition of an object, which may bring about pleasantness or unpleasantness." It seems that James takes feeling as an immediate experience, and the immediate response to the object of religion has to be a feeling-response. It is in this sense that feeling comes to represent the essential core of religion. He observes that "religion is essentially private and individualistic; it always exceeds our powers of formulation."[13]

In fact, Schleiermacher, along with many thinkers of the Romantic Movement, conceived religion as purely an affair of the heart, "the feeling of absolute dependence" (*Abhängigkeitsgefühl*), which he believes to be the absolute irreducible feature of religion.[14] The "consciousness of being absolutely dependent," for him, is same as "being in relation with God."[15] But such an attitude has dangerous consequences: (a) It leads to the bifurcation of reason from other human faculties, and (b) religion becomes a totally subjective affair in which 'anything goes'. Here, in the words of Jan Van der Veken, "religion becomes no different from liking or disliking strawberries, a matter of taste."[16]

Against certain voluntarists, like Hugh of Saint Victor, who regard payer as an affective motion of the will, St. Thomas holds that "prayer, in its strict sense, is an act of the intellect."[17] Although both intellect and will are operative, prayer is formally of the intellect, because the role of the will is to move the intellect to make the petition. James himself is aware of the fact that "feeling is private and dumb," and, therefore, the need to construe our feelings intellectually. Theologies and dogmas are the results of spontaneous and natural construction by the intellect on the feeling-contents of religion. However, these philosophic and theological attempts are always considered as secondary processes, which, in no way, warrant the veracity of the sentiments from which they derive their own stimulus, and borrow the conviction they possess.[18]

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[12] Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection*, La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company, 1973, 40.

[13] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 430.

[14] F. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1928, 18.

[15] Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 12.

[16] Jan Van der Veken, "Meaning and Reference of the Word 'God'," Course Notes on 'Philosophy of God' (Spring 1992), 10.

b. A personal/dialogical relation

The emphasis on 'solitariness' echoes on the subjective or personal dimension that characterizes religious experience. James shifts the centre of religion from collective life to the 'individual'. He feels that religion is discernible in the life of the individual wo/man – that too in her/his 'solitude'. For religious response is essentially a consequence of the individual's apprehension of her/his relation with what s/he considers to be the 'divine'.

Prayer is, thus, conceived as a communication between an 'I' and a 'Thou' – whether it is verbal or non-verbal, whether it finds no outward expression at all or is expressed by gestures only, whether it is offered by an individual or performed collectively by a group, whether it is a spontaneous creation of the moment or a fixed, stereotyped prayer formula. It is this person-to-person, dialogical relation to God that makes religion a personal experience.

Such a dialogical relationship establishes a bond between the 'I' and the 'other' without constituting a totality.[19] Emmanuel Levinas calls this a "covenantal relationship," which is possible only in a covenantal religion. He proposes this religion as the authentic and mature one, for only the covenantal religion can sustain a relationship in which the identity of the 'same' and the radical alterity of the 'other' are preserved: "... the relation between the being here below and the transcendent being that results in no community of concept or totality – a relation without relation – we reserve the term religion."[20]

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[17] Saint Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2a 2ae, 83.1.

[18] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 430-31.

[19] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969, 79-81.

Heidegger's philosophy, if interpreted theistically,[21] provides us with sufficient material to construct a genuine philosophy of religious experience. According to Heidegger, Being calls us into 'existence'[22] and wo/man experiences this call fully, only when s/he commits her/himself to this call unconditionally in an act of personal response. This personal response is based on human recognition that her/his existence is a free gift from the loving hands of God with whom s/he can speak and be related in an act of personal commitment. But, since existence is a gift given to human collectivity, this response has to be collective as well. Prayer is, thus, both individual and social. The theological reason for this is the unity of the Spirit, who animates each of the individual believers.[23] However, the believers should not forget that the ultimate meaning of collective prayer is to lead the individual to God.

4. Characteristics of Religious Experience

In tune with his pragmatic method, James asserts that the proper way to judge the significance of religious experience is by assessing its fruits, which are manifested in human lives. That is why James gives much value to such experiences as 'saintliness', which somehow has the effect of changing the life of an individual, and of making the lives of others better.

James clearly explains, at least, two kinds of characteristics – 'religious' and 'psychological'. The former includes the attitude toward the world, the higher or spiritual realm and also 'inner communion'. Under the latter come the character of religious zest and earnestness and that of love and compassion. Implicitly, he also refers to religions' role of answering the problems of meaning.[24]

a. Religious and psychological significance

The sense of the 'divine' makes one aware that the visible world is part of a more spiritual universe. Whoever possesses strongly this sense thinks that the smallest details of this world derive infinite significance from their relation to an unseen divine power. The thought of this order yields him a superior mode of happiness (bliss), and a steadfastness of soul with which no other can compare; and 'union' or 'harmonious relation' with the 'divine' is considered to be his goal of life and the true end.[25] Prayer or inner communion with the 'divine' is a process, wherein work is really done and spiritual energy flows and produces effects, whether psychological or material, within the phenomenal world. For James, prayer is religiously valuable, only when it serves as a function of life.

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[20] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 80.

[21] See John Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity*, London: SCM Press, 1994, 16ff.

[22] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie, New York: Harper & Row, 1962, 67.

[23] Rahner, *The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, 1275.

[24] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 466.

James also enumerates certain psychological attributes associated with religious beliefs. "(a) A new zest, which adds itself a gift to life, and takes the form either of lyrical enchantment or of appeal to earnestness and heroism. (b) An assurance of safety and a temper of peace, and in relation to others, a preponderance of loving affections."[26] Moreover, in James' view, the saintly lives exhibit several fruits of religion, such as felicity, purity, charity, patience, self-severity, etc. in the best possible measure. In social relations, their service is exemplary. Their help is inward as well as outward, for their sympathy reaches souls as well as bodies, and they turn their back on nobody, however thankless s/he may be.[27]

b. Function of meaning

As indicated above, religions serve the function of answering the problems of meaning.[28] The first and the most obvious function is that of *cognitive* meaning. Religions are required to give a descriptive account of the reality that human beings experience. In other words, they are required to explain the unexplainable, particularly in providing cognitive structures for events that have no natural or material explanation. The function of religion in this regard is to help enhance the quality of life of believers.

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[25] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 369.

[26] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 485-86.

[27] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 369-70.

[28] See Kanika Khandelwal, "Religion: A Psychological Construct and Its Psychological Relevance," in S. M. Tripathi, ed. *Religious Positivity*, Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2001, 175-188; Colin Campbell, "A New Age Theodicy for New Age," in Linda Woodhead, ed. Peter Berger and the Study of Religion, London: Routledge, 2001, 74-77.

Secondly, there is a function that is associated with *emotional* meaning. In addition to indicating what general attitude or emotional tone individuals should take toward life and universe, religions should also offer more specific guidance on what individuals should feel and under what circumstances. In this respect, religious beliefs and values assist individuals to handle their emotions, by offering a framework of meaning that enables men and women both to experience catharsis and to translate such negative feelings as fear, anxiety, or despair into the positive ones of calm, confidence and optimism.

The third function of religious beliefs is concerned with *moral* meaning. Here religions should provide guidance on how individuals should act or conduct themselves in the world. The moral function of right or wrong, good or evil, just or unjust is validated by religious doctrines. Religious beliefs and values, thus, regulate the exercise of moral freedom and responsibility between self and others. In brief, religions tell people not only what to *think* and *feel* about the world and themselves, but also indicate what *actions* they should perform in order to become 'acceptable' in the world and in relation to the 'divine'.[29]

5. "Whatever They May Consider the Divine"

The key to the distinctiveness of religious experience lies in the phrase "to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine." According to James, the 'divine' or 'the more' as we call it and the meaning of our 'union' with it, form the nucleus of any enquiry of religious experience. Specification of the reference to the 'divine' expresses the concept of the *transcendent*, which is generic to many of the theories of religious experience.

a. Nature of the 'Divine'/the 'More'

Those who believe that the transcendent has a reality of its own have identified it with "the Universe" (Friedrich Schleiermacher), "the Holy" (Rudolf Otto), the "Wholly Other" (Soren Kierkegaard), the "Being beyond-being" (Paul Tillich), and with other realities. On the other hand, those who deny its objective reality often admit, nonetheless, that belief in the *reality* of the transcendent is characteristic of religious experience. Some identify it with "the collective unconscious" of wo/men (Carl Jung), the "projection of human imagination" (Feuerbach), wo/man's "higher/ideal self' (Erich Fromm), and so on.

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[29] Campbell, "A New Age Theodicy for New Age," 76.

James does not, however, define the 'divine' in terms of theistic traditions (as in Judaism, Christianity, or Islam), which conceive God as infinite and omnipotent and as capable of doing anything and everything. He rather describes the 'more' in terms of the "subconscious self": "The more with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on its hither side the sub-conscious continuation of our conscious life."[30] Moreover, James argues that, it, firstly, vindicates theologian's contention that the religious wo/man is moved by an external power, for it is one of the peculiarities of invasion from the sub-conscious region to take an objective appearance and to suggest to the subject an external control. Secondly, the sense of union with the power beyond us is a sense of something, not merely apparently, but literally true, since it is primarily the higher faculties of our own hidden mind, which are controlling.[31] Whatever be the descriptions of the *divine*, all would agree that there is 'something', which goes beyond the individual, in/by which s/he transcends her/his finite conditions.

Now, the question is whether the religious consciousness is only *potentially universal* or is it *actually* so? What is demonstrable from both believers and non-believers is that humankind as a whole has been incurably religious. Freud acknowledges that what Schleiermacher calls religious, viz., "the feeling of absolute dependence," is indeed a universal experience. Literary existentialists, like Kafka and Beckett, also reflect modern wo/man's longing for God. Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is a reflection of Heidegger's phrase "waiting for God." Sartre's designation of the fundamental human project as "the desire to be God" is a clear indication of the essentially religious character of wo/man. Walter Kaufmann stresses the same point more dramatically, when he says, "Man is the ape that wants to be God." In view of all these considerations, it seems safe to claim some kind of 'universality' for religious experience.

b. Reality of the 'Divine'/the 'More'

The more critical question, however, does not relate to the universality, but to the *reality* of religious experience. Is there really a transcendent to fulfil the needs which wo/men sense? Or, is it a mere absurd project, "a useless passion" of wo/man to realize God? Various forms of "theistic reductionism" have in common the claim that the proper use of theistic language (namely "God") does not involve affirming that God, in fact, exists. For example, Braithwaite thinks that "God" does not refer to an existing entity; nonetheless, it is used in worship, since it is effective in "promoting good moral behaviour."[32]

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[30] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 512.

[31] See William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, New York: Longman, 1911, 122.

Another form of reductionism takes its most thoroughgoing expression in the works of D. Z. Phillips. For instance, Phillips says, "The difference between a man who does and a man who does not believe in God, is like the difference between a man who does and a man who does not believe in a picture."[33] If so, are the enlightened believers to think that the object of their worship and prayer is a pure concept or fiction? Or, is it possible consistently to live in the mode of worship, while at the same time thinking that the reality of God is truly conceptual?

First of all, it is difficult to assume that not only some wo/men have been deceived about the reality of God, but that all 'religious' men and women, who have ever lived, have been completely deceived into believing that there *is* a transcendent, when there really *is not*. Secondly, if worship is a relational activity in which the worshipper relates in a special way to the "Focus of Worship,"[34] or an activity of addressing God (as a 'Thou'), it involves the practical affirmation of the related as capable of responding with actions of its own originating from itself. That is, it involves the assumption of the reality of the related, or addressee, as an "In-itself" reality.

If God were not conceived as existing in-itself, then the concept "God" could *not* have its reasonable use as one through which a life of 'communion with' is enjoined. One does not believe 'God is real', just insofar as s/he worships him. On the contrary, the believer worships God because s/he believes that God's reality requires it. If the believer thinks that God is only an effective presupposition necessary for living the life of faith, then the believer's experience and action within her/his life of faith will change: S/he will *no* longer live her/his life as a communion with, but as *pretending* at communion with. The affirmation of God's existence, then, is essential to the actual life of religion, to an authentic life of faith and love in action.

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[32] R. B. Braithwaite, "An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief," in Basil Mitchell, ed., *The Philosophy of Religion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, 72-91.

[33] D. Z. Phillips, *Faith and Philosophical Enquiry*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970, 89.

[34] Ninian Smart, *The Concept of Worship*, London: Macmillan, 1972, 44.

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THE PRAYER OF THE NAME IN THE HINDU TRADITION

Subhash Anand[♦]

1. Introduction

Years ago some of my friends told me that a Hindu child from the neighbourhood would occasionally come and sit in their chapel while Mass was being celebrated. They did their best to get the child tell them her name, but without success. One day I was invited by them to celebrate the Eucharist for them. On seeing the child I said: "Oh Jyoti! I am so happy to meet you." The little one was not pleased at all and so, not without some disdain, she said to me: "I am not Jyoti. I am Kiran!" That is exactly what I wanted. When I called the child by some other name, the child was upset, because deep down the little girl felt that I was confusing her for some other child and, thereby, disregarding her unique identity. Somehow our name is intimately linked with our person. This explains why "name and naming activities are central to human symbolic and communicative processes. To be human is to name, and be named, and thereby to possess full being and the ability to relate to the world in meaningful ways."[1]

Just as we call one another by a special name, so too different religions have given different names to the divine. In some way the name is related to the understanding the community has of God. Hence, "the name of God plays an important role in all the mystical and religious traditions of the world."[2] The name is part not only of the theological

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[1] *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, s.v. "Name and Naming," by Frederick M. Denny, 300b.

[2] Günther D. Sontheimer, "Foreword" to *The Divine Name in the Indian*

discourse of the scholars, but also of the religious praxis of the believing community. This explains why the practice of the prayer of the divine name is found in some way or the other both in primal religions – which are confined to a particular tribal community or to some folk religiosity, and also in the religions, which have found followers from peoples of different regions of the earth.

The study of Hinduism reveals that "perhaps nowhere has the meaning of the divine name been more intensely and uncompromisingly explored by mystics than in India."[3] The practice of chanting the names of God (*nāma-saṁkīrtana*) is part of the joyful and sorrowful moments in the life of some Hindus.[4] In this study I confine myself to the practice of invoking the divine name or names in the Hindu religious tradition. After presenting an historical background, I attempt a theological reflection on this form of prayer and conclude by describing a method that may enable us to make *nāma-japa* – the practice of reciting just one name – part of our own spiritual life.

2. The History of the Prayer of the Name

The prayer of the name of God can be of two types: a litany of many names, or an ejaculation involving only one name. Both these forms find their place in the Hindu tradition. The impression, however, is that in the earlier phase the litany was more common. Gradually, however, the chanting of a short formula becomes the more common expression of devotion.

a. The Vedic period

We find the practice of invoking the divine name already in the earliest Vedic texts. This practice was not confined to any particular deity. Thus, in

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Tradition, by Sankar Gopal Tulpule, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1991, vii.

[3] Sontheimer, "Foreword" to *The Divine Name in the Indian Tradition*.

[4] Surajit Sinha, "Vaiṣṇava Influence on a Tribal Culture," *Krishna: Myths, Rites and Attitudes*, ed. Milton Singer, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966, 70, 72; Milton Singer, "The Rādhā-Krishna *Bhajanas* of Madras City," *Krishna: Myths, Rites and Attitudes*, ed. Milton Singer, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966, 105.

the oldest text of the Hindus, a sage invokes the beautiful (*cāru*) name of Agni, hoping to be blessed by him.[5] In another hymn, the sage pays homage to the name of Rudra with many bows or salutations (*namas*), a name which is said to be *kalmalkin* (brilliant),[6] an expression that occurs only once in the *Ṛg-veda*. Even the names of generous donors are gratefully praised.[7] Sometimes the same deity is given more than one name.[8]

The Vedic sages developed "this principle of *multiple denomination...* in a most elaborate fashion in the case of Rudra."[9] This explains the presence of the *Śatarudrīya* ("The Hymn of Praise to the Hundred Rudras" or "... Rudra in his Hundred Aspects"),[10] that we find in the *saṁhitās* of the *Yajur-veda*. It is the first attempt to bring together the different names of Rudra-Śiva. It consists "of a lengthy series of declarations of 'homage' or 'obeisance'" to Śiva's "many names, traits, abodes, attendants and famous deeds."[11] It is also in this hymn that we encounter for the first time the *mantra* most commonly used by devotees of Śiva: *namaḥ śivāya* (I bow to Śiva).[12] The hymn reveals his auspicious and frightening features. "With the possible exception of Varuṇa, Rudra is the only god in the entire company of Vedic deities who is conceived to be a radically ambivalent deity."[13] This hymn was chanted when offerings were made to Rudra. This litany had a formative influence on the development of Vedic piety.[14] Even today the chanting of this litany is an important part of the ritual of Mahāśivarātri.[15]

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[5] *Ṛg-veda-saṁhitā*, 1.24.2 (text as in *Ṛg-veda-saṁhitā*, with the commentary of Sāyaṇācārya, Poona: Vaidika Samshodhana Mandal, 1933-51).

[6] *Ṛg-veda-saṁhitā*, 2.33.8. Sāyaṇa interprets it as *jvalat*, and explains its derivation as "*kalayati apagamayati malam*."

[7] *Ṛg-veda-saṁhitā*, 1.48.4.

[8] *Ṛg-veda-saṁhitā*, 1.164.46; 8.69.9.

[9] J. B. Long, "Rudra as an Embodiment of Divine Ambivalence in the *Śatarudrīya Stotram*," in F. W. Clothey and J. B. Long, eds., *Experiencing Śiva*, Columbia, South Asia Books, 1983, 104.

[10] Long, "Rudra as an Embodiment," 106.

[11] Long, "Rudra as an Embodiment," 105.

[12] *Vājasaneyi-saṁhitā*, 16.41; text as in S. D. Satavlekar, ed., Aundha (Satara Dt.): Svadhyaya Mandal, *vik.*, 2003.

[13] Long, "Rudra as an Embodiment," 104.

The Upaniṣads do not make any reference to the practice of reciting the divine name. But, using the image of an archer, they tell us how we can experience communion with the highest reality. The instruction given by the Upaniṣads, as contained in the monosyllabic *om*,[16] is the bow, the self (*ātman*) is the arrow sharpened by meditation and Brahman is the goal.[17] The repeated recitation of *om* anticipates the practices of some schools of Hinduism: not the chanting of a long litany of God's names, but the repetition of one particular name, and this becomes the heart of their spiritual life.

b. The epic period

The *Mahābhārata* is the record of the gradual emergence of the great cults that dominate Hindu religiosity today: the cults centring on Śiva, or Viṣṇu or some form of Durgā or Umā. The epic brings together the different names of these two gods to form the great litanies popularly known as the *sahasra-nāma*: the litany of a thousand names. "In the *Mahābhārata*, there appeared for the first time a mode of religious worship consisting [merely] of the recitation of the divine names (*nāmajapa*) of God."[18] The Hindu tradition has travelled a great distance from the period that produced the *Śatarudrīya*.

The litanies in honour of Śiva and Viṣṇu are found in the thirteenth book of the epic (*Anuśāsana-parvan*). Kṛṣṇa himself tells Yudhiṣthira about his meeting with the sage Upamanyu, who taught him the litany in honour of Śiva, a litany of a thousand and eight names (*aṣṭa-uttara-sahasra*).[19] These names have been derived from the scriptures and the auxiliary texts (*veda-vedāṅga-sambhava*), names well known all over the world (*sarva-loka-vikhyāta*), names uttered by Brahmā and other sages.[20] These names enable the devotee to achieve all that he desires (*sarva-artha-sādhaka*).[21] They proclaim the glory of Śiva. Even an expert cannot adequately describe the Lord's glory even if he were to spend hundreds of years (*varṣa-śata*) in trying to do so.[22]

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[14] Long, "Rudra as an Embodiment," 105.

[15] Long, "Rudra as an Embodiment," 106.

[16] *Kaṭha-upaniṣad*, 2.15; unless otherwise stated the texts of this Upaniṣad is taken from V. P. Limaye and R. D. Vadekar, eds., *Eighteen Principal Upaniṣads*, Poona: Vaidika Samsodhana Mandala, 1958.

[17] *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*, 2.2.3-4.

[18] Long, "Rudra as an Embodiment," 107.

[19] *Mahābhārata*, 13.17.29; unless otherwise stated texts of *Mahābhārata* are from the critical ed., Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1933-71.

The *Viṣṇusahasranāma* is taught by Bhīṣma in response to Yudhiṣṭhira's question: "Who is that one God who alone is the one goal of humans? Who is that God whom we must praise and worship? What is our supreme duty (*parama-dharma*)? Praising (*japan*) whom will we get freedom from the bonds of birth and death?"[23] In his reply Bhīṣma tells Yudhiṣṭhira that Viṣṇu is the one Lord of all (*sarva-loka-maheśvara*),[24] and, hence, the recitation of Viṣṇu's litany is our highest duty (*adhikatama-dharma*),[25] and this recitation alone is able to take us beyond all our sorrows (*sarva-duḥkha-atiga*).[26]

The *Bhagavad-gītā*, a small part of the sixth book (*Bhīṣma-parvan*) of the *Mahābhārata*, has become a very important text for many Hindus today. It does not explicitly speak about the prayer of the name. However, from the description it gives about *bhakti*, both as means and the end,[27] it will not be rash to suggest that its author was aware of the religious practice of chanting the divine name. This suggestion is borne out by the fact that, reminiscent of the Upaniṣads, Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna what a person should do at the moment of death. He should recollect himself as much as possible, lovingly focus his mind on Kṛṣṇa, and chant *om*. Whoever does this will be freed from death and rebirth.[28]

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[20] *Mahābhārata*, 13.17.2.

[21] *Mahābhārata*, 13.17.3.

[22] *Mahābhārata*, 13.17.7.

[23] *Mahābhārata*, 13.135.2-3.

[24] *Mahābhārata*, 13.135.6.

[25] *Mahābhārata*, 13.135.8.

[26] *Mahābhārata*, 13.135.6. In his book, *The Divine Name in the Indian Tradition*, Tulpule discusses the *Viṣṇusahasranāma* (pages 148-50), but nowhere does he make any reference to *Śivasahasranāma*. In the notes added to the critical edition of the *Anuśāsana-parvan*, we find references to some recent editions of *Viṣṇusahasranāma* (page 1113). I do not find a similar entry for *Śivasahasranāma* (page 1062). There are quite a few English translations of the former but – as far as my knowledge goes – only one of the latter: Subhash Anand, *Śiva's Thousand Names: An Interpretative Study of Śivasahasranāma*, New Delhi: Intercultural Publishers, 1998. This is all the more surprising because, as has been noticed by many scholars, "an impressive number and diversity of names and epithets are assigned to Rudra throughout every phase of Indian religion. He is the multiform deity par excellence." Tulpule, *The Divine Name in the Indian Tradition*, 104.

c. The purāṇika period

The *Śiva-purāṇa*, as the name indicates, "is a sacred treatise of Śiva's legends and ritual."[29] It seems to have been "consolidated in its present form in the eight century [C.E.]."[30] It maintains that the *mantra* "*śivāya namaḥ*" is the enlarged form of the sacred word *om*. By chanting this five-syllabled prayer (*pañca-akṣara*) the devotee can attain all perfection.[31] Only Śiva, and none other, knows the secret of this prayer.[32] This prayer is very highly recommended:

> It is impossible to explain in detail the glory of the five-syllabled mantra, even in hundred crores of years. Hear it in brief. "The six-syllabled mantra (*ṣaḍ-akṣara*) is found in the Veda and Śivāgama.[33] It facilitates the understanding of all topics by the devotees of Śiva. It consists of very few syllables but is pregnant with meaning. It is the essence of the Vedas. It is conducive to salvation."[34]

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[27] For the relevant texts see R. C. Zaehner, *The Bhagavad-Gītā*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, 437-39, 446-48.

[28] *Bhagavad-gītā*, 8.6-16; text as in *Mahābhārata*, cr. ed. For the influence of the Upaniṣads on the passage cited, see Zaehner, *The Bhagavad-Gītā*, 262-66.

[29] J. L. Shastri, ed., "Introduction," *The Śiva-purāṇa*, 4 vols., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979, xii.

[30] Pushpendra Kumar, ed., *The Śiva Mahāpurāṇa*, Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1964, vii.

[31] *Śiva-purāṇa*, 1.17.33-34; text as in Kumar, *The Śiva Mahāpurāṇa*.

[32] "*rahasyam śivamantrasya śivo jānāti na aparaḥ*," *Śiva-purāṇa*, 1.18.158.

[33] By including the *praṇava* (*om*) we have six syllables.

[34] *Śiva-purāṇa*, 7.2.12.3-4; Eng. trans. from Shastri, *The Śiva-purāṇa*, 1951.

Thus, the *Śaiva* tradition maintains the Vedic origin of this prayer. It was taught by the omniscient Śiva himself.[35] The chanting begins with *om*, because Śiva, though omnipresent, is stationed (*sthita*) [in a very special way] in this one syllabled prayer (*eka-akṣara-mantra*).[36]

The *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* has been a major influence in the development of Vaiṣṇavism.[37] It presents us a very forceful appeal in favour of the prayer of the divine name. It begins by telling us a story about a Brahmin, Ajmila. He had abandoned his wedded wife and was living with a prostitute. He was deeply attached to her and to his offspring through her. As a result, he soon lost all virtue, even resorting to questionable means to make his wife and her children happy. He had a very special love for the youngest child, Nārāyaṇa.

One day, Yama's messengers came to lead Ajmila to the realm of the dead. Frightened by their horrible look, he began to shout for Nārāyaṇa. Hearing the name of their Lord being called out, the attendants of Viṣṇu rushed to the scene. There followed a discussion between the messengers of Yama and the attendants of Viṣṇu. The former stated that Ajmila had violated *dharma*. Hence he was doomed to be punished by Yama. But the latter declared him purified as he had uttered the name of Lord Nārāyaṇa, and then to justify themselves the attendants of Viṣṇu explain the efficacy of reciting the name of the Lord:

> The name of the Lord frees man from all his sins even if he invokes it to call somebody (other than the Lord), jokingly, as a (meaningless) interjection, or even with (seeming) disrespect... Just as a powerful drug is effective even when used by a person who does not know its potency, so too the name of the Lord is effective irrespective of the fact whether a man knows its power or not.[38]

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[35] *Śiva-purāṇa*, 7.2.12.6.

[36] *Śiva-purāṇa*, 7.2.12.8.

[37] Subhash Anand, *The Way of Love: The Bhāgavata Doctrine of Bhakti*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1996, 4-8.

[38] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 6.2.14, 19; text as in *Śrīmad Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, Gorakhpur: Gita Press, 1971. All quotations from this text are my own translation.

We have a similar eulogy of *nāmajapa* in Śuka's parting advice to King Parīkṣit.[39]

The *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* itself concludes with these words: "I bow to that Lord the recitation of whose name destroys all sin. By bowing to Him man is freed from all suffering."[40] No form of reparation for sin is so effective as *nāmajapa*,[41] even if they were very great sins (*mahā-pātakas*).[42] *Nāmajapa* is so effective because it deepens *bhakti*, fixing the mind of the devotee on the Lord,[43] filling it with an awareness of his greatness.[44]

Nāmajapa is a prayer meant for all, even for those who have advanced on the way to perfection: "For those who have turned away from this world, and want to be freed from all fear, and also for accomplished spiritual men the recitation of the name of the Lord is the best way."[45] *Nāmajapa* can be a continuous prayer. Its very simplicity makes this possible. Even work, when it is undertaken in obedience to the Lord, need not be an obstruction to prayer.[46]

In the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, we have several formulae for *nāmajapa*. These formulae refer to the attributes of God, to his creative function, to his iconographic form, or to his descent as Kṛṣṇa. However, the formula "*Om namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*" seems to be given preference, it being the greatest secret,[47] the twelve-syllabled wisdom.[48]

d. Regional *Śaiva* traditions

The Śaiva tradition of Tamilnad has produced very great mystics, whose hymns continue to inspire the devotees even now. Appar, Campantar, and

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[39] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 6.2.11.

[40] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 12.13.23.

[41] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 6.2.7.

[42] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 6.2.9-10.

[43] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 6.2.10b.

[44] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 6.2.11.

[45] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 2.1.11.

[46] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 1.5.36.

[47] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 4.8.53.

[48] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 6.8.7; 8.16.39.

Cuntarar are considered "as the principal saint-leaders... of the Tamil Śaiva sect. They lived between the sixth and eighth centuries A.D."[49] The collection of their poems together makes the *Tevāram*, "the primary scripture for Tamil Śaivas."[50] The five-syllabled formula (*pañca-akṣari-mantra*), *namaḥ-śivāya*, is highly praised by these poet-saints. It is the essence of the Veda and it melts the heart of the devotee. When chanted with love it is sweeter than honey, prevailing over the power of Yama, washing away even the greatest sins, leading the devotee to God.[51]

In the Vīraśaiva or Liṅgāyata tradition of Karnataka, the *mantra* "*namaḥ śivāya*" is one of the eight helps to devotion (*aṣṭāvaraṇa*).[52] It is the *mahā-mantra*, the great and only prayer of the Vīraśaiva devotees.[53] Basava (12th century) rejected the traditional Hindu expressions of piety: going to a temple, making offerings to the gods, etc.[54] The devotee need not go to any temple. All he needs to do is to chant the name of the Lord, who resides in the temple of his devotee's heart.

> "Om namaḥ Śivāya!" is the spell;
> "Om namaḥ Śivāya!" the talisman;
> Merely to think of our Lord Kūḍala Saṅgama
> Is charm enough![55]

Through it the devotee is purified of all his sins:

> To tame the sins that bind you to this life
> Won't it suffice to say:
> "Om namaḥ Śivāya: I bow?"
> I keep on saying: "Hara, Hara,

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[49] Indira V. Peterson, *Poems to Śiva: The Hymns of the Tamil Saints*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1961, 4.

[50] Peterson, *Poems to Śiva*, 4.

[51] Peterson, *Poems to Śiva*, 217-21.

[52] S. C. Nandimath, *A Handbook of Vīraśaivism*, Dharwar: Lingayata Educational Association, 1942, 50-54.

[53] Nandimath, *A Handbook of Vīraśaivism*, 63.

[54] Shivakumara Shivacharya, "Introduction," to Basava, *Vacanas of Basavaa*, ed. H. Deveerappa, Sirigere (Chitradurga): Annana Balaga, 1968, 29-43. In this book, the introduction has a separate page-numbering, but using the Arabic numerals.

[55] Shivacharya, "Introduction," 26-27. The expression *Kūḍala Saṅgama* "is the Mudrā (seal) of the Vacanas of Basavaṇṇa." Shivacharya, "Introduction," 459.

Śaṅkara, Śiva, Śiva, Śaṅkara,
Hail, O hail, Śaṅkara: to thee I bow."
And all my sins are gone![56]

It is the source of peace and joy. This name is the real teaching, the climax, of all the Vedas and all the sacred sciences, nay even of human reasoning:

"Om namaḥ Śivāya!" –
Short of this spell the Veda stays!
"Om namaḥ Śivāya!"
Short of this spell the Śāstra stays!
"Om namaḥ Śivāya!"
Short of this spell the Tarka stays![57]

e. Regional Vaiṣṇava traditions

The Vaiṣṇava tradition of Maharashtra owes a lot to Jnanadeva (1275-96), "this great spiritual fountainhead."[58] He, too, attaches much importance to *nāmajapa*: "The utterance of the name of God is the only royal road to meet Him. All other means, like yogic practices, performance of sacrifices, wandering from one holy place to another, and bathing in the sacred waters are of no avail... The name of God is like a door of His temple."[59] Tukaram, who is perhaps the most popular saint-poet of Maharashtra, was a great devotee of Viṭṭhal – the local version of Viṣṇu.[60] He sees the chanting of the divine name as the experience of life beyond death (*amṛta*) already while we are still in this world. Let me quote Tukaram himself: "O King of Paṇḍhari, how can there be any anxiety concerning birth and death to those who surrender themselves to you? O Cakrapāṇī, how can there be any fear in the one who has in his mouth Your name which is vivifying *amṛta*?"[61] The chanting of the divine name by holy people has a community dimension, because "the men of God live by the *amṛta* and share it with others.[62]

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[56] Shivacharya, "Introduction," 26-27.

[57] Shivacharya, "Introduction," 27.

[58] B. P. Bahirat, *The Philosophy of Jnanadeva*, Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1956, rep. 1996, xii.

[59] Bahirat, *The Philosophy of Jnanadeva*, 19.

[60] T. Dabre, *The God-experience of Tukaram: A Study in Religious Symbolism*, Pune: Jnanadeepa Vidyapeetha, 1987, 16.

[61] Cited in Dabre, *The God-experience of Tukaram*, 171.

Śrī Caitanya (1485-1533) is best known for his contribution towards the revival of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult in Bengal, Orissa and some parts of Uttar Pradhesh.[63] He attaches "the greatest importance to the chanting of the Lord's name, which alone may take one to the highest goal, and it is perhaps for this reason that the scriptures of the *Bhakti* cult admit no difference between Him and His name."[64] For this practice to be helpful the devotee must have humility and respect for others.

Śaṅkara Deva (1486?-1568) was the apostle of the Vaiṣṇava faith in Assam. Then the religious life of the common people was "influenced greatly by Buddhist Tāntric observances and ceremonies."[65] To counter the Buddhist influence, "he designated his form of initiation as *śaraṇa*, and divided it into three categories, as *nāma-śaraṇa*, *guru-śaraṇa* and *bhakta-śaraṇa*, corresponding to the Buddhist *dharma-śaraṇa*, *Buddha-śaraṇa* and *saṅgha-śaraṇa*."[66] The importance of the divine name in the spiritual vision and practice of Śaṅkara Deva was so great that "the congregational prayer house was called *nāma-ghar*."[67] Since in this tradition, "the main method of worship is *kīrtana* or singing the praise of the name of the Lord, it is also called Nāma Dharma."[68] The chanting of the divine name was only a means "to purify the mind, [and] to help one realize the supreme Deity, who is otherwise indescribable (*avyakta*) and formless (*mūrti-śūnya*)."[69] If the name of God is so powerful, then its unbecoming use is a very great sin. One may be freed from all other sins through just one chanting of the divine name, but "the person committing offence against such [*sic*] Hari-Name definitely sinks to the bottom as there are no means of salvaging him."[70]

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[62] Dabre, *The God-experience of Tukaram*, 172.

[63] Radha Govinda Nath, "A Survey of the Caitanya Movement," in Haridas Bhattacharya, *The Cultural Heritage of India*, 4 vols., Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission, 1937; rev. ed. 1956, rep. 1969, vol. 4, 186-200, here 188-89.

[64] Nath, "A Survey of the Caitanya Movement," 195.

[65] Raj Mohon Nath, "Śaṅkara Deva and the Vaiṣṇava Movement in Assam," Bhattacharya, *The Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. 4, 201-10, here 203.

[66] Nath, "Śaṅkara Deva and the Vaiṣṇava Movement in Assam," 203.

[67] Nath, "Śaṅkara Deva and the Vaiṣṇava Movement in Assam," 203.

[68] Nath, "Śaṅkara Deva and the Vaiṣṇava Movement in Assam," 206.

[69] Nath, "Śaṅkara Deva and the Vaiṣṇava Movement in Assam," 207.

Tulasīdāsa (1532-1623) popularised the cult of Rāma in the Hindi region through his writings, especially through *Rāmacaritamānasa*, "the most important, the best known and the largest of his works."[71] This text tells us that the name of Rāma is the very breath of the Veda (*veda-prāṇa*).[72] If the name of Rāma is on the tongue, then it serves as a bright lamp, illumining both the inside and the outside of the devotee.[73] This name is so beautiful that even people who have fulfilled all their desires still chant this name.[74] It is higher than the qualified (*sa-guṇa*) and even the unqualified (*a-guṇa*) forms of God.[75] Even those who are considered the least in the society are supremely sanctified by the holy name.[76] It purifies the devotee of all the evils of Kali-yuga.[77] Chanting this name people cross the boundless ocean of life here (*ati-apāra-bhava-sāgara*).[78] Other means may be helpful in the first three ages, but in the Kali-yuga only the divine name can save us.[79]

f. Modern Hinduism

Shiv Dayal Singh (1818-1878) founded the Rādhāsoāmī Satsaṅg in 1861. For him and his followers, Kabir was the highest saint. "The core of the teaching of Kabir is worship of the Name of the Lord."[80] Hence, it is no surprise that the holy name (*sat-nāma*) is considered very important by the members of the Rādhāsoāmī Satsaṅga, and constantly remembering this name (*nāma-smaraṇa*) is an essential part of their *sādhanā.* God is spoken of as Rādhāsoāmī: not the Lord of Rādhā, but the Lord who is Rādhā, that is, the Lord who is Love. This is the highest conception of God, and only through His revelation can we come to the knowledge of this name.[81]

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[70] Śaṅkaradeva, *Kīrtana*, 2.44, Eng. trans., Chandrakanta Mahanta, *The Kirttana*, Jorhat (Assam): Asom Satra Sangha, 1990, 7.

[71] Candra Kumari Handoo, "Tulasīdāsa and His Teaching," in Bhattacharya, *The Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. 4, 395-407, here 296. I depend on this article for the date of Tulasīdāsa.

[72] *Rāmacaritamānasa* 1.18.1. I am quoting from Tulasīdāsa, *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa*, Gorakhpur: Gita Press, 1976, p. 37. The first, second and third numbers indicate the *kāṇḍa*, *dohā* and *caupāyī*, respectively. Sometimes the reference is to a *doha*, then there will be only two numbers.

[73] Tulasīdāsa, *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa*, 1.21, page 40.

[74] Tulasīḍsa, *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa*, 1.22, page 41.

[75] Tulasīḍsa, *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa*, 1.22.1, page 41.

[76] Tulasīḍsa, *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa*, 2.194, page 419.

[77] Tulasīḍsa, *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa*, 3.10.8, page 521.

[78] Tulasīḍsa, *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa*, 4.28.2, page 592.

[79] Tulasīḍsa, *Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa*, 7.102b, page 831.

[80] Isaac A. Ezekiel, *Kabir: The Great Mystic*, Beas (Punjab): Radhasoami

In his life, Mahatma Gandhi presents a fairly healthy combination of tradition and modernity. Brought up in a very traditional Vaiṣṇava family, he was familiar with the popular religious practices of his family and community. As a child he had a great fear of ghosts. His nurse told him that the repetition of Rāma's name would help him overcome this fear.[82] This childhood practice remained with Gandhi all through his life. It would also become "the most important part of congregational prayer,"[83] that was a regular feature of his ashram. This form of prayer "is as simple as it is effective. Only, it must proceed from the heart. In its simplicity lie its greatness and the secret of its universality."[84] Gandhi believed that the Rāma of his chanting was not an historical person, but simply his name for the one God of all. "He belongs equally to all...; [hence, there is] no reason

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Satsang, rep. 1992, 191. Given the importance of the divine name in the teaching of Kabir, some readers may well ask a very pertinent question: Why has Kabir not been mentioned in the main text when discussing the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava traditions as a thinker in his own right? There is only one reason I have not done so: "It is obvious from Kabir's own writings that he never wanted to establish any sect. He who had opposed tooth and nail all rites and rituals, all outward forms of worship, he who had opposed all castes, creeds, dogmas, theologies, pilgrimages, bathing in holy rivers, visits to mosques and temples, he who had declared to the Mulla that his loud cry from the minaret was stupid and asked him whether the Lord, who could hear the tinkling of a microscopic bell tied to the tiny leg of an ant, needed the loud cry? – could such a saint be a party to all that is being practised in his name today?" Ezekiel, *Kabir*, 89. Kabir is beyond the traditional Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava divide.

[81] Agam Prasad Mathur, *Radhasoami Faith: A [sic] Historical Study*, Delhi: Vikas Publishers, 1974, 19-21, 81-86.

[82] M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, (1927-29) 14th rep. (no date), 27.

[83] M. K. Gandhi, *Food for the Soul*, Anand T. Hingorani, ed., Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1870, 86.

[84] Gandhi, *Food for the Soul*, 87.

why a Mussalman or anybody should object to taking His name."[85] Hence, according to him, all can join in the chanting.

Swami Sivananda (1887-1963), founder of the Divine Life Society, "felt that modern scientific education introduced by the Christian missionaries and the British Raj was leading Hindu youth astray, and alienating them from their religious practices and tradition."[86] He wrote many books on Hindu philosophy and practice. He, too, gives a great importance to *nāmajapa*:

> What a lot of joy the repetition of His Name brings! What a lot of power it infuses into man! How it changes the human nature marvellously! How it exalts a man to the status of Divinity! ... How sweet is God's Name! How it brings you face to face with the Lord and makes you realise your oneness with Him (*Para Bhakti* – Supreme Love)![87]

What fire, by its very nature, does in the material world – burn and purify – *nāmajapa* does in our spiritual life.[88] We become what we think. Hence, if through *nāmajapa* we constantly think of the Lord then we will become like the Lord.[89]

Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896-1977) tries to make the Caitanya tradition come alive again for modern humans. In 1966 he founded the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). Here again we see a rejection of some aspects of modern culture, namely acquisition of unneeded wealth, consumer culture, competitiveness, distancing from nature, etc.[90] The traditional concept of *māyā* points precisely to this "world of the establishment with its emphasis upon sense gratification."[91] We need to become aware of the deeper significance of our life, and this becomes possible through the chanting of the Lord's name. This is "the sublime method for reviving our transcendental consciousness."[92] This is the most effective spiritual discipline for our times.[93]

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[85] Gandhi, *Food for the Soul*, 88.

[86] S. C. Gyan, *Sivananda and His Ashram*, Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1980, 13.

[87] Swami Sivananda, *Japa Yoga*, Sivanandanagar: Divine Live Society, 1967, 13.

[88] Sivananda, *Japa Yoga*, 14.

[89] Swami Sivananda, *Lord Siva and His Worship*, Shivanandanagar, Divine Life Society, 1980, 36.

[90] J. Stilson Judah, *Hare Krishna and the Counterculture*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974, 16.

3. The Theology of the Prayer of the Name

We have seen that throughout its history Hinduism has given a very great importance to the practice of the prayer of the name of God. This form of prayer is also found in many religious traditions, not only in India, but also in other parts of the world. Hence, some questions are bound to be asked: What is the significance of name and name giving? Why is the prayer of the divine name so common among humans? I shall now try to reflect on these questions.

To understand the hyperbolic praise bestowed on the prayer of the divine name, we need to see what significance is attached to a name. A name can be used merely to indicate, to point out something or someone as different from other individuals. In this case there is no real connection between the name and that which is named. This is like giving a number to a person appearing for an exam. The number given tells us nothing about the person to whom it is given. In fact, in this case the number serves to give anonymity to the candidate, so that in evaluating the answers, the examiner is guided not by *who* wrote them but merely by *what* is written. Names have a demonstrative function. They give a face to an otherwise faceless individual, and, thus, ensure that one does not get lost in the crowd. This enables us to enter into a dialogue with a person who is not just part of a crowd, but has significance in oneself. This is the reason why the name of a person "is of great importance. It is the key to effective relationship between two partners, both for the one who is named and for the other who uses his name in speaking to him."[94]

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[91] Judah, *Hare Krishna and the Counterculture*, 16.

[92] Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *The Science of Self-Realization*, Bombay: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, rep. 1977, 146.

[93] Prabhupada, *The Science of Self-Realization*, 148.

[94] Paul Tournier, *What's in a Name?* London: SCM Press, 1975, 10.

In some primal communities the name chosen is intimately linked with the totem. In this way the individual is seen as part of the clan. In other communities there are also individual totems. In both these traditions the totem is believed to be the source of protection:[95] the more names people have the greater will be the protection they experience.[96] The Christian custom of choosing a patron saint for an individual, community, etc., may well be a carry-over of this ancient practice. As a member of the clan, the person receiving a name has certain rights and duties. A nameless person is not yet a person, in the sense that his or her individual identity has not yet been affirmed.

The name could tell us something about the reality named. Then it is not merely an empty label but also a description. The names may contain information about the place of origin or residence of the individuals named, their relation to other members of a family the wish their parents have for them, their outer appearance, their profession, the company they keep, their achievements, change of status, etc. Here are a few examples: Urban – born in a city, Sylvester – living in a forest, Primus – the first child, Sundara – "May he be beautiful!", Kālī – the dark lady, Sonī – making or selling gold ornaments, Victor – victorious in battle,[97] Pravīṇa – one who has excelled in some area of learning, etc. This way of naming individuals may be one explanation for the litany of many names of a god or goddess. The early humans were more concrete in their thinking. They also thought of their god or goddess more or less in the same way as they thought of each other. The only difference was that the god was much more and he was related not merely to an individual or some special group but to all the members of the clan. Their deities too had their abode, special appearance, escort, achievements, etc.[98] "Each of the epithets in the hymn served as a *mnemonic* device to aid the worshipper in recalling the virtues, powers, exploits and offices of the deity for purposes of meditation and worship."[99]

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[95] *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, s.v. "Totemism," by Roy Wagner (Vol. 14, 573a-576b).

[96] *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. "Names (Primitive)," by George Foucart (Vol. 9, 130a-136b).

[97] In *Ṛg-veda*, 8.80.9, we meet a sage desiring an additional name – besides the three he already has, derived from his relation to the sacrifice. "This shows that a man could have a fourth name even in the times of Ṛg [*Ṛg-veda*] due to the performance of a yajña." P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, 5 vols., Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, rev. ed., 1968-75, vol. 2, 240.

[98] In *Ṛg-veda*, 1.6.4, the Maruts get a sacrifice-related name (*yajñiya-nāma*).

There is, however, a deeper reason for the use of litanies in religious life. The ancient poet-saints experienced the multifaceted character of Reality. They felt the presence of this Reality in every creature they encountered in their day-to-day life, be it animate or inanimate. They could not easily express their experience in one single word or term, image or concept. A contemporary scholar may be baffled by the often contradictory ideas put together, but the ancient sages were thinking not so much in clear and distinct concepts but more often through images that complete and correct each other.[100]

In the course of time, what was originally a poetic insight became a handy religio-political tool. When different independent tribes and clans came together through political conquest, their gods were not abandoned; instead the god of the conqueror absorbed the function and names of the gods of the conquered. Monotheism or monolatrism became a political need, legitimising the status of the monarch and his authority over the conquered peoples. This way of giving the deity many names may have some connection with the court eulogies composed by wandering bardic poets. Wherever they went, they would praise the king by mentioning not only his good qualities, achievements, etc., but also by super-imposing on their patron the good qualities and achievements of other kings. Their patron was not merely one king among other kings. He was the king of kings and lord of lords for them, at least, as long as they were in his kingdom.

Sāyaṇa interprets *yajñiya* as *yajña-arha* or *yajña-yogya*: worthy to receive a *yajña*. Originally the Maruts were not considered as worthy to be honoured through a *yajña*.

[99] Long, "Rudra as an Embodiment," 107.

[100] Commenting on the Vrātya tradition documented in the *Atharva-veda*, this is what Griffith has to say: "it is hard to understand, and I do not attempt to explain, the idealization and grotesquely extravagant glorification of the Vrātya or heretical nomad who appears at one time to be a supernatural Being endowed with the attributes of all-pervading Deity, and at another as a human wanderer in need of food and lodging." R. T. H. Griffith, trans., *The Hymns of the Atharva-Veda*, 2 vols., Banaras: E. J. Lazarus, 1895-96, vol. II, 199.

The name, however, may have a deeper function. When a young man is deeply in love with a young woman, then for him her name acquires a powerful evocative function. His friends may praise some other woman having the same name, but the lover will think that they are praising his ladylove, and, hence, in the heart of hearts he will be happy, and there will be a smile on his face. In like manner, the name of the Lord is more than a description. The Lord who is formless (*a-mūrtika*) is called *mantra-mūrti.*[101] Śrīdhara says that the Lord has no form (*mūrti*) except the one expressed by the *mantra.*[102] The *mūrti* is not merely an image, but somehow makes the deity present to the devotee.[103] The name of the Lord is a *mūrti*, i.e., it is not an empty representation of some distant reality, but a symbol of the divine presence.[104] This explains why the chanting begins with *om*. Because even though God is present everywhere, he is specially present in the *praṇava* or *om.*[105]

There is a still deeper significance of the divine name. "In all human communities there is thought to be a close relationship between the name of a person or other phenomenon and its character, status, and very being."[106] Since the divine name shares in some way the very being of the divine reality, it shares in the power of the divine. Thus, it is not merely an evocative symbol but also an effective sacrament. "There is power in names, because they both participate in the reality named and give definition and identity to the reality. That is, name and named exist in a mutual relationship in which the power of the former is shared with the being of the latter."[107] In primal religions all the individuals of a particular clan bore the name of their totem, thereby ensuring themselves its protection. In the Hindu tradition, this way of thinking has its roots in the way the Vedic sages understood the role of the *yajña* and of all the articles to be used, gestures to be made, and formulae to be recited or chanted.

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[101] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 1.5.38; 4.8.58.

[102] *amūrtikam mantroktavyatiriktamurtiśūnyam*. Comm. on 1.5.38.

[103] According to the Hindu belief, after the image has been duly consecrated by the rite of *prāṇa-pratiṣṭhāna* (the rite of infusing breath), the deity is supposed to dwell therein. Hence after the *pūjā* is over, either the image continues to be kept in a fitting place, receiving regular homage, or it is put beyond profane use. This is done by submerging it in the sea or a river or even an unused well.

[104] Anand, *The Way of Love: The Bhāgavata Doctrine of Bhakti*, 195.

[105] *Śiva-purāṇa*, 7.2.12.8.

[106] Denny, "Name and Naming," 300b.

[107] Denny, "Name and Naming," 300b-301a.

> The Vedic priests believed that the hymns and ritual formulae were oral embodiments of cosmic forces. Not only couplets (*śloka-s*), lines (*mantra-s*) and quarter-lines (*pāda-s*), but words and even individual syllables (*akṣara-s*) are homologised with particular parts of the cosmos and with various deities who are believed to be in control of the many departments of the natural and social orders. Along with this belief in the efficacy of the Sacred Word is the conviction that the Divine Names serve not merely as figurative or symbolic representations of the god so-named, but as concrete and highly efficacious embodiments of the spiritual essence of the deity himself... In brief, sacred words of invocation and the divine power(s) designated by the terms are thought to be one and the same within the context of the sacrifice.[108]

As an embodiment of God the divine name shares, in a mysterious way, in his infinite power,[109] instilling fear into Fear itself.[110] This is also the belief of Hindus today. "*Nāma* and *Nāmī* are indeed one. This is the central truth upon which the sacred *Sādhanā* and the science of the practice of the Divine Name (*japa*) are firmly based. This mystical identity is the secret of its efficacy and power to confer illumination upon the practitioner."[111] If the name of his beloved can deeply move the lover, then this is much more true of the divine name. One modern Hindu writer puts it in a very homely manner:

> If you utter the word 'excreta' or 'urine' when your friend is taking his meals, he may at once vomit his food. If you think of 'Garam Pakoda', 'hot Pakoda', your tongue will get salivation. There is a

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[108] Long, "Rudra as an Embodiment," 108.

[109] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 1.18.19.

[110] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 1.1.14.

[111] Swāmī Chidānanda, "Foreword" in Sister Vandana, *Nāma Japa: The Prayer of the Name*, Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1984, ix-x, here ix. So also Sivananda, *Japa Yoga*, 14: "*Nāmī* and *Nāma* are inseparable."

> *Śakti* in every word. When such is the case with ordinary words, how much more power or *Śakti* should there be in the Name of God.[112]

This mysterious identity between the Divine and its name, explains why the Jews hesitated to take the name of God. So too, out of respect, Hindus do not take the name of their spouses.

The name of the Lord is a secret.[113] He alone knows the secret of its power.[114] No man can come to know it by his own intelligence.[115] Only the Lord can reveal it to us.[116] This is easily understood if we bear in mind that the name is not just a label, but a way of describing the named, an attempt at pointing out not merely the named but also in some way the essence of the named. Since the name is a description and some kind of presence, to give one's name is to disclose one's self, to reveal one's self, to share one's secret, more than that – to surrender one's self. God being the transcendent mystery, the formula containing his name is bound to be the highest secret.[117]

From the analysis of the formulae cited above, we can easily see that the *nāmajapa* is essentially a form of praise. The *yajña* is always ordained to some purpose,[118] but the *nāmajapa* is the expression of selfless love, of *ahaituki-bhakti*, and as such, it is the highest form of worship,[119] and, therefore, is capable of making reparation for any defect in the *yajña*.[120] The devotee is expected to repeat the *nāmajapa* formula while performing image-worship,[121] because it is this chanting of the Lord's name that gives meaning to image-worship, making it what it ought to be: an expression of love, praise and service.

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[112] Sivananda, *Japa Yoga*, 20.

[113] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 1.6.27; 1.9.47.

[114] *Śiva-purāṇa*, 1.18.158.

[115] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 1.3.37.

[116] *Śiva-purāṇa*, 7.2.12.6.

[117] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 4.6.53. In his *Bhakti-sūtra*, Śāṇḍilya seems to attribute the origin of *nāmajapa* to Jaimini, the sage who composed the *Mīmāṁsā-sūtra* (*nāmeti jaiminiḥ samhbavāt*, *Bhakti-sūtra*, 61). This would not be impossible, because the Mīmāṁsakas hold that "all words have a natural denotative power by which they themselves, out of their own nature, refer to certain objects irrespective of their comprehension or non-comprehension by the hearer," and that they are "eternally existent." S. N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, 5 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922-55; Indian reprint by Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975, vol. 1, 395-96. This doctrine may help us to understand why the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* suggests that even the inadvertent invocation of the Divine Name can be effective.

[118] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 1.53.1-8.

[119] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 1.5.38.

4. The Practice of the Prayer of the Name

One modern Hindu writer shares with us his experience of practising *nāmajapa* and its impact on his life:

> It is no exaggeration when I say that it is the Name which has sustained me throughout. It is impossible for me to narrate in detail how many times I have been saved by the Name from falling into the abysmal depths of sin, how many times It has guided me along the right path amidst circumstances of stress and difficulty, how many times It has saved me from the clutches of satanic forces, how many times It has rescued me from grave dangers, how many times It has stood by me as a loving friend amidst terrible sufferings and sorrows, in what miraculous ways It has supplied my wants and saved my honour and what rare and incomparable treasures It has conferred on me, treasures which I could never dream of possessing through my own efforts.[122]

He found the practice of *nāmajapa* a help towards spiritual growth. "As for myself, when I used to take the Name with interested motives, it saved me... but It did much more. My relish for the Name grew more and more, which led ultimately to the development of the spirit of disinterested practice of the Name."[123] A person, deeply in love, constantly thinks of his beloved, even when the beloved is absent, or when he himself is involved in some work. Constant *nāmajapa* is possible if the aspirant grows in love for the Lord. Continuous *nāmajapa* is the articulation of a mind that is fixed on the Lord, and therefore a man who in life constantly thinks of the

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[120] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 8.23.16.

[121] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 4.8.54.

[122] Hanumanprasad Poddar, *The Divine Name and Its Practice*, Gorakhpur: Gita Press, 1940, rep. 1953, 8.

[123] Poddar, *The Divine Name and Its Practice*, 23.

Lord, can hope to die with the name of the Lord on his lips.[124] I shall now suggest a method of making *nāmajapa* part of our life and eventually our constant companion. The method I propose is based on the talk of Fr. Anthony D'Mello, I heard over forty years ago.

a. Choosing the *mantra*

In some Hindu communities there is one *mantra* which is used by all the devotees for *nāmajapa*. But we also have instances when a special *mantra* is chosen by the *guru* or *ācārya* and imparted to the devotee. In this case it is a secret to be safeguarded. This latter practice is based on the assumption that our prayer is intimately linked with our individual personality in a given space-time framework. The *mantra* may indicate where we are in our spiritual journey, our peculiar way of understanding God and our relation to Him, the area we need to grown in, etc. Hence, we need to take time to choose our own formula. As we progress in our prayer-life, we may feel the need to modify our *mantra*, to shorten it, or even to choose a new *mantra*.

I suggest that the *mantra* should have eight syllables. Here are some examples: "Abba Father, your name be praised." "Loving Father, help me love you." "Holy Father, help me trust you." The *mantra* must be in our mother-tongue, or in another language in which we normally articulate our deeper feelings and aspirations. The reason why the *mantra* should have eight syllables is that then we can more easily synchronize our *mantra* with our breathing: the first four syllables while breathing in and the remaining four syllables while breathing out. Later on, we can drop the second half and repeat the first two syllables while we breathe in and the remaining two while we breathe out. Still later we may need only two syllables.

b. Appropriating the *mantra*

Sometimes we are so taken up by the face of a person, or some other aspect of her or his behaviour that we find ourselves thinking of that person even without making any special effort. This may even happen even when we want to quieten our mind and get down to prayer. This happens very strongly in the lives of young people. A young man becomes aware of the fact that the face of a young woman whom he met recently keeps on coming back to his consciousness. He has fallen in love with her and so her face has found a place in his sub-conscious. We can have a similar experience with the *mantra* – by making it part of our sub-conscious.

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[124] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, 1.9.23.

After you have chosen the *mantra*, write it on some pieces of paper. Place one piece where you hang your clothes, another near your toothbrush, another on the inner side of your door, etc. After you have changed your clothes and are in bed for restful night, start repeating the *mantra* slowly, and if possible synchronize it with your breathing. Breathe gently and slowly. Soon you will fall asleep. Between being fully awake and fully asleep, there is, what we may call, the twilight zone. This is the time when our sub-conscious opens up. Slowly our *mantra* begins to find a place there. When you get up in the morning, the piece of paper near your toothbrush will remind you of your *mantra*. Make an effort to repeat the *mantra* silently as you brush your teeth, etc. You may even take the *mantra* for your 'meditation'. For this you must sit comfortably in a place where there are no mosquitoes or other forms of disturbances.

As you do this daily, especially if you are careful to repeat the *mantra* as you lie down to sleep, soon you will find that the *mantra* keeps on coming to your mind without any effort on your part. When this happens, accept it and consciously repeat it. As you do this, you will be surprised that the *mantra* comes more and more frequently to your mind. You have *fallen in love* with your *mantra*. It has become part of your sub-conscious. The more you consciously accept it as it surfaces, the more rooted will it become within you, and the more often it will remind you of its presence in your life. Thus, slowly you will find that whenever your mind is not engaged in any other activity you are praying, that is, while having a wash, while waiting for a bus, while sweeping your room, etc. Thus, our life will become more and more a prayer.

c. Praying the *mantra*

Hindu writers repeatedly tell us that *nāmajapa* is the most suitable prayer for people living in the Kali-yuga – that includes you and me. What is being suggested is that spiritually we are very weak. We need a simple form of prayer, and the *nāmajapa* is just that. "It is only '*Nama-Smaraṇa*' that is free from difficulties and troubles."[125] We can do the *nāmajapa* silently all by ourselves, or we can do it together as a community. This is very helpful because when we gather as a community we encourage each other and we generate a prayerful atmosphere. This is the reason why traditional and modern Hindu writers point out the importance of *satsaṅga*:

> The most powerful aid to meditation, however, is *satsaṅga*. The word can mean both the company of saints, as well as the company of the seekers. The company of saints is more effective, but at the same time more rare... *Satsaṅga*, in this sense [i.e., as the company of the seekers], has been one of the thematic headings present in the writings of almost all poet-saints.[126]

I myself have been practising the prayer of the name for some years now. My *mantra* at the moment is: "Abba Father, all praise to you." In writing this essay I have also shared my experience with you, my readers. If the reading of this essay helps you in your spiritual journey, then please whisper a prayer for the writer, that he, too, may come closer to the Lord and to His children. When this happens our prayer becomes our life, and our life becomes our prayer.

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[125] Sivananda, *Japa Yoga*, 21.

[126] Tulpule, *The Divine Name in the Indian Tradition*, 133.

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THE "LORD'S PRAYER" AND THE DYNAMICS OF CHRISTIAN LIVING

Paul Savio Pudussery[♦]

1. Introduction

Prayer is the language of our relationship with God. This relationship must express itself throughout our life, because every iota of our being is linked to God. Prayer is principally not 'saying' something before God, but 'being' in the dynamic presence of God. In other words, prayer is more a matter of 'being with' God than of 'talking' to God. It is essentially a relationship culminating in our communion with God. The foundation of Christian prayer is Jesus' own experience of prayer and his teachings about prayer. Before he taught his disciples about prayer, first he lived the life of prayer. Some important prayer moments in Jesus' life, which reveal his deepest personality, are mentioned in the Gospels, and these are typical of his life-style. For example, in Mk 1:35 we read: "And in the morning, a great while before day, he [Jesus] rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed."[1] The expression, "*he prayed*" is used here absolutely, that is, without any predicate.[2] It is not mentioned, as in Mk 14:35, what he prayed for. Hence, the simple clause "he prayed" implies that Jesus was in a personal relationship with his Father; that he

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[1] As a general rule, the text of RSV is followed here and hereafter, because of its avowed faithfulness to the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek original. Wherever it is found necessary, the NRSV text is also used.

[2] Mk 6:46; Lk 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18 are some other instances of such absolute use. In many other instances where Jesus is presented as praying, his prayer has assumed different forms; for example, there are prayers of praise and thanksgiving (Mt 11:25-26; Lk 10:21), prayers of intercession (Lk 22:31-32; 23:34), submission (Lk 22:42) and surrender (Lk 23:46).

was in communion with his Father. This personal relationship with God is what we call prayer. Jesus is thus the supreme paradigm or example for it and he demands from his disciples the same kind of relationship with him: "And he appointed the twelve, *to be with him*..." (Mk 3:14). "To be with him," means to have fellowship with him, to have communion with him, to have a deep and intimate relationship with him.

The purpose of all prayer is to enter into a deep relationship with God (vertical relationship). But we cannot enter into real relationship with God unless we try to enter into a healthy relationship with our fellow brethren (horizontal relationship). This is what Jesus brings out beautifully in Mt 5:23-24: God is more interested in our relationship with others than with our sacrifices (see also Is 1:15-17; Mic 6:8). This twofold communion with God and the neighbour is very well seen in the "Lord's Prayer." The first three "you-petitions" help us to enter into a vertical relationship with God as Father and King and the last three "we-petitions," especially the first two "we-petitions," help us to enter into a horizontal relationship with our brethren. Devotion to God and devotion to one's neighbour go together. When a person breaks his contact with others, his contact with God is also broken, and in such a situation there cannot be any real prayer (see Lk 18:9-14). One can approach God in prayer and worship only when one is united with one's neighbour in love. Lord's Prayer is, indeed, an ideal prayer where Jesus teaches his disciples not only to establish contact with God and their neighbour, but also how to deepen that contact with both.

The most basic form of prayer that we find in the Gospels is petition: "Ask, and it will be given to you" (Mt 7:7).[3] Almost all the sayings of Jesus on prayer recorded in the Synoptic Gospels are about prayer of petition; thus, the expression "to pray" in the Gospels is almost synonymous with "to ask."[4] The effectiveness of such a prayer is affirmed repeatedly in forceful language: "Ask, and it will be given to you"; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Mt 7:7 = Lk 11:9). Here Jesus speaks with a firmness that allows no restriction or limit or condition; his affirmation that prayer is heard is universal and absolute.[5]

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[3] In the Gospels we find Jesus strongly encouraging his followers to use petitionary prayer. The prayer of petition is essentially the recognition and acceptance of our weakness and nothingness - an existential emptiness which only God can fill, Abhishiktananda, *Prayer*, New Edition, Eng. trans., New Delhi: ISPCK, 1989, 71.

[4] George M. Soares-Prabhu, "*Speaking to Abba*," in *Collected Writings of George M. Soares-Prabhu, S.J.*, vol. 3: *Biblical Spirituality of Liberative Action*, ed. Scaria Kuthirakkattel, Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 2003, 48.

2. Jesus as the Teacher of the "Lord's Prayer"

For the Christians, Jesus is the greatest teacher of prayer. The whole spiritual experience of Jesus based on his prayer life was the dynamic force of his activity. Any prayer of Jesus, especially, Lord's Prayer, helps us enter into the mind and heart of the Master himself. The Lord's Prayer is, indeed, "the Christian prayer *par excellence*." It has an enduring quality because it possesses intensely divine aspects as well as intensely human aspects. It recalls to our mind our most fundamental relationship with God and at the same our most abiding needs. This prayer contains the important themes of Christian faith – the Fatherhood of God, the hope for the perfect reign of God and perfect doing of God's will, humans' utter dependence on God for everything that relates to their daily sustenance, forgiveness of sin and deliverance from the powers of evil and sin. The Lord's Prayer, indeed, has been a teacher of Christian faith from early times. Lord's Prayer contains in nutshell the central elements of Jesus' teaching. According to Tertullian, the Lord's Prayer is truly "an epitome of the whole Gospel."[6]

3. The Influence of OT and Judaism on the Lord's Prayer

It was in the first century Jewish Aramaic environment of Palestine that Jesus had taught his disciples the Lord's Prayer. The words and language Jesus used in this prayer are to be understood against their OT and Jewish backgrounds. Prayer is an essential element in the religious life of Israel, because her whole history is permeated with the spirit of prayer. Israel was characteristically and pre-eminently a praying people. Jesus might have been very familiar with the prayer forms of the Hebrew Bible and inherited the prayer culture of the OT religion. Though we cannot see exact parallels between the Lord's Prayer and the prayers of the OT, here and there we can find some correspondences between them. The description of God as

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[5] Soares-Prabhu, "*Speaking to Abba*," 48-49.

[6] *On Prayer*, chapter 2, Eng. trans., in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, eds. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963, 681.

"father" is a recurring trait of the OT prayer. For example, in Dt 32:6 and Is 63:16 God is called the "father" of Israel and Israelites implicitly his children. The petition "hallowed be your name" finds its echo in some of the OT texts, such as Lev 22:32, "I will be hallowed among the people of Israel"; Is 29:23, "they will sanctify my name" (see also Is 29:23; Ezek 20:12; Sir 36:4). The prayer, "your kingdom come" is echoed in Dan 2:44, "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed." The clause "*Your will be done*" occurs in a different form in 1 Macc 3:59-60, "It is better for us to die in battle than to see the misfortunes of our nation and the sanctuary. But as *his will in heaven* may be, so he will do." The thought of the petition, "give us today our daily bread," is expressed differently in Prov 30:8, "feed me with the food that is needful for me." In the same way, the idea contained in the petition, "forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors," is well expressed in Sir 28:2, "forgive your neighbour the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray." The petition, "but deliver us from evil," finds its echo in Ps 59:2, "deliver me from those who work evil."

As a Jew, Jesus might have been familiar with the prayers of Judaism, too. In Jesus' time the tradition of prayer among the Jews had been gradually expressed in various regulations. All the Israelite men were obliged to recite every morning and evening the *Shema Israel*. Another great prayer of Judaism is "*Tephillah*," which is also known as "the Eighteen Benedictions" or the *Amidah*. According to rabbinical injunction, prayer must begin with the praise of God and only thereafter should follow the petitions about the needs of the praying person.[7] "The Eighteen Benedictions" fall into three parts: the first part, consisting of three Benedictions, gives praise to God for his sovereignty, power and holiness; the last part, consisting of three Benedictions, gives thanks to God for his goodness and it closes with a prayer for peace. The middle section, consisting of twelve Benedictions, forms a series of petitions for the needs, spiritual and material, of the community and of its individual members. Thus, the Eighteen Benedictions show the pattern of rabbinical prayer: *praise*, *petition*, and *thanksgiving*. The Lord's Prayer has the same three parts. The first part offers praise to God by asking that his name be hallowed, his kingdom come, and his will be done. Then come petitions for human needs, and finally, the doxology, which, again, praises God. In the original text of the Lord's Prayer there was no doxology; probably it was added later in order to provide a third part to the Lord's Prayer.[8] "Eighteen Benedictions" is the chief prayer of Judaism and every Israelite, including women, children, and even slaves, is required to recite it three times a day, in the morning, the afternoon and the evening. This reminds us of the important directive given by *Didache* concerning the recital of the Lord's Prayer: "Three times a day thus shall you pray." Jesus, in his boyhood and adulthood, might have prayed these prayers of Judaism. When we compare the Lord's Prayer with other Jewish prayers current in the first century, especially, the Kaddish[9] and the Eighteen Benedictions, we can easily find that there are some formal similarities between them, but the present form is due to Matthew and his community.[10] These similarities only add depth and radiance to the Lord's Prayer.

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[7] Herbert Jai Singh, *The Lord's Prayer*, Bangalore: ISPCK for the CISRS, 1985, 70.

Against this background, it is worth-mentioning the similarities between the Lord's Prayer and the Jewish prayers in their structural form:[11]

Our Father who art in heaven	Our Father, our King (*Rabbi Akiba*[12])
Hallowed be your name	Exalted and hallowed be His great Name (*Kaddish*)
Your kingdom come	May He establish His kingdom (*Kaddish*)
Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven	Your will be done in heaven above (*Tosephta Berakoth* 3:7)
Give us this day our daily bread	Satiate us out of Your goodness. Bless our year like the good years (*Eighteen Benedictions*, No. 9)
And forgive us our debts as we also have	Forgive us, our Father, for we have

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[8] Gordon J. Bahr, "*The Use of the Lord's Prayer in the Primitive Church*," in Jakob J. Petuchowski and Michael Brocke, eds., *The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy*, eng. trans., London: Burns & Oates, 1978, 152-153.

[9] *Kaddish* ("Holy") is an ancient Aramaic prayer, which formed the conclusion of the service in the synagogue and with which Jesus might have been familiar from childhood.

[10] M. Eugene Boring, *The Gospel of Matthew*, in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol.8:*Matthew-Mark*, Senior NT ed. L.E.Keck, Nashville:Abingdon Press, 1995, 202.

[11] Adapted from Herbert Jochum, "*Teaching Lord's Prayer*," in Petuchowski and Brocke, eds., *The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy*, 186-187 and Jakob J. Petuchowski, "*Jewish Prayer Texts of the Rabbinic Period*," in Petuchowski and Brocke, eds., *The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy*, 30-39.

forgiven our debtors	sinned (*Eighteen Benedictions*, No. 6)
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil	Look at our affliction, and champion our cause. And redeem us speedily for the sake of your Name (*Eighteen Benedictions*, No. 7).

However, the Lord's Prayer, as it exists now, has no equivalent counterpart either in the Old Testament or in Judaism and it has its own uniqueness and excellence. It is noted for its "simplicity, conciseness, clarity, and spiritual comprehensiveness."

4. Two Forms of the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:9-13 = Lk 11:2-4)

We have two forms of the Lord's Prayer: the familiar longer version of Matthew (6:9-13) and the shorter version of Luke (11:2b-4). It is Matthew's version that has always been used in our daily prayer and in our liturgy. When we compare the texts of Matthew with that of Luke in parallel columns we can find the characteristic differences:[13]

Matthew 6:9-13	**Luke 11:2b-4**
Our Father who art *in heaven*,	Father,
1. Hallowed be your name.	1. Hallowed be your name.
2. Your kingdom come.	2. Your kingdom come.
3. *Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*	
4. Give us *this day* our daily bread.	3. Give us *each day* our daily bread.
5. And forgive us our *debts*, *as we also have forgiven* our *debtors*.	4. And forgive us our *sins*, for *we ourselves forgive* everyone indebted to us.
6a. And lead us not into temptation,	5. And lead us not into temptation.
6b. *but deliver us from evil.*	

First of all, the most striking difference is that the Lord's Prayer in Matthew is longer than in Luke. In Luke, God is addressed simply as "Father"; in Matthew there is the addition of "*our*" and "*in heaven*." In Luke the third petition of Matthew is omitted. In the fourth petition Luke has changed "*this day*" of Matthew to "each day." In the first clause of the

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[12] Rabbi Akiba, B. Taanith 25b. This is the earliest recorded version dating back to 2nd century.

[13] The Matthean and the Lucan texts that are given below are adapted from RSV and NRSV based on the Greek text.

fifth petition Luke has used "sins" in the place of Matthew's "*debts*," and in the second clause of this petition Luke has employed the expression "everyone indebted to us" in the place of Matthew's "*our debtors*." Again, in the place of Matthew's past tense, "*as we also have forgiven*," Luke has used the present tense, "for we ourselves forgive." In Matthew, the sixth petition is extended as to include "*but deliver us from evil*."

If we ask, which version, whether of Matthew or Luke, is original, it is difficult to answer. According to Joachim Jeremias, the shorter text in Luke is to be regarded as the original one and the text in Matthew is to be considered as an expanded one basing on the Lucan text and his argument is that "no one would have dared to shorten a sacred text like the Lord's Prayer and to leave out two petitions if they had formed part of the original tradition."[14] The two petitions that are omitted in Luke are the third ("Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven") and the second part of the sixth petition in Matthew ("but deliver us from evil"). J. Jeremias takes the second part of the sixth petition in Matthew as the seventh petition. The Lord's Prayer as given by Matthew has a better rhythm and its wording is more Semitic, and, hence, his language in many places is the more original. The difference in the Matthean and Lucan forms of prayer shows that the first Christians were convinced that the fidelity to Jesus' thought was more important than the exact material reproduction of his words. This also holds true regarding the Eucharistic words.

The concluding doxology, "*For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever. Amen*" (see the RSV and NRSV margins), appears in some of the later manuscripts of Matthew. Probably the ancient church added this doxology for ending the prayer with praise and for liturgical reasons. The doxology is modelled after the prayer of David in 1 Chron 29:11. The Lord's Prayer is also found in the *Didache* and is almost identical with the Matthean version with some minor changes.

5. The Different Contexts of the Two Versions

a. The Matthean context

The context in which the Lord's Prayer is given in Matthew and Luke differs from each other. Matthew inserts the Lord's Prayer in the Sermon on the Mount, which has been delivered by Jesus early in his public ministry. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus, first of all, teaches, by means of six antitheses, the new radical approach his disciples should adopt in their relationship with their fellow-humans (Mt 5:21-48). Next, Jesus teaches his disciples what should be their new relationship with God and how they should express this new relationship in their religious observance or piety (6:1-18). Jesus gives a general warning not to exhibit their "*piety*" before others to be seen; the practice of piety is to be directed to God alone (Mt 6:1). The three different forms of piety in Judaism are *almsgiving*, *prayer*, and *fasting* (see Tobit 12:8) and Jesus accepts these as central to the religious life of his disciples, too. They are treated in three passages (Mt 6:2-4, 5-6, 16-18), which have a parallel structure. Each passage has a negative part (6:2, 5, 16), followed by a matching positive part (6:3-4, 6, 17-18). Mt 6:7-15 is a long digression on prayer and interrupts the carefully balanced structure. This digression on prayer is probably an insertion by Matthew, made up of independent sayings of Jesus, including the Lord's Prayer.[15]

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[14] *The Prayers of Jesus*, Studies in Biblical Theology, Second Series, No. 6, London: SCM Press, 1967, 90.

Let us take the long section on prayer (Mt 6:5-15) as it is given in the Gospel text. This section could be seen as a catechesis on prayer meant for the instruction of the newly baptized in the Matthean community and the Lord's Prayer forms a part (and indeed, the heart) of this instruction on prayer.[16] The Matthean Church, mostly consisting of Jewish Christians, already knows the art of prayer from their childhood and, therefore, they need only to be warned and admonished about the *quality* of prayer and the dispositions required when praying. They are to be taught about the right attitude and spirit of praying. In the Matthean context, the Lord's Prayer is a model prayer of how a faithful Christian should pray: brief, to the point, and sincerely. The Matthean version, with its additions, is clearly most appropriate for Jewish Christians. Indeed, there is nothing in it that a pious Jew of the first century or even today could not say.

b. The Lucan context

The Lucan version of the Lord's Prayer is sometimes called the "*Lord's Prayer for Gentile Christians*." The Lucan Church consisted mainly of Gentile converts and they *had to be taught* (Lk 11:1c, "Lord, *teach us* to pray") and encouraged to pray (see Lk 11:5-13).[17] Luke's setting for the prayer is very different from Matthew's. He probably gives the original context and gives the Lord's Prayer apparently much later in the public ministry of Jesus and in response to a specific request from one of the disciples, who asks Jesus to *teach* them to pray as John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray (Lk 11:1bc). Besides, Luke presents the Lord's Prayer in the living context of Jesus' own example of praying (11:1a). This shows that the teaching on prayer should not be separated from the life of prayer. Only a praying person can give an impressive lesson on prayer to others.

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[15] Boring, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 200.

[16] Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 88.

6. The Immediate Context of the Lord's Prayer

The significance of the Lord's Prayer is to be seen in the context of Jesus' teaching on prayer in general (6:5-15). In prayer the disciples of Jesus are to be different from "the hypocrites" (the Pharisees) and Gentiles. The hypocrites make a display of their prayer, which the disciples have to avoid (6:5). What the disciples are asked to do is to direct their prayer to God alone and not to others; it is such God-oriented prayer that is genuine and will be heard by God. Unlike the Pharisees, the disciples have to go to their "*room*" (6:6). The corresponding Greek word *tameion* means "inner room" (Mt 24:26), or "private room" (Lk 12:3). Scripture and early Christian writers refer to this "inner room" as symbolising the "*heart*," which is the core of our innermost being where man can be alone with the Alone and it is here Jesus tells his disciples and us to pray to our heavenly Father.[18] The picture of the "inner room" takes us to the mystery of '*interiority*', the "*cave of the heart*," which is characteristic of the Indian approach to the divine.[19] It is in this interiority of the spirit, in this "cave of the heart," that God dwells and man establishes communion with Him.

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[17] This section, Lk 11:5-13, consists of the parable of the friend at mid-night (vv. 5-8), which functions here as an encouragement to pray and an admonition to persevere in prayer, even if one's prayer is not heard immediately, and the sayings about the efficacy of the prayer (vv. 9-13).

[18] George A. Maloney, *Sparks from the Burning Bush: Growth in Deeper Prayer*, Second Indian Reprint, Bangalore: I. J. A. Publications, 2000, 137.

[19] Swami Abhishiktananda, *Hindu-Christian Meeting Point Within the Cave of the Heart*, trans. Sara Grant, Bombay: The Institute of Indian Culture, 1969, 24; see also V.F. Vineeth, *The Asian Vision of God*, Bangalore: Vidyavanam Publications, 2004, 96: "The Indian accent is that God is sought in the depth of one's own self."

Prayer, in the Indian tradition, is seen as an inward journey – an *antar-yātra*, a pilgrimage to the centre of being.[20] This is the Indian (Eastern) approach of interiorization, where one discovers and realizes the Real within one's own interior depth, in the innermost recesses of the being.[21]

In Mt 6:7 Jesus criticizes the Gentile way of praying to God. They recite long prayers thinking that their many words will be heard (6:7). What is highlighted here is the pagan attempt to manipulate God through a flood of words. But Jesus tells his disciples that they should avoid this kind of 'praying'. Besides, they should realize the truth that what they need is already known to God (6:8; see also Is 65:24). Prayer does not inform God about our needs; God already knows the needs of his people (Mt 6:32; Lk 12:30). The stress on economy of words in prayer is already found in the OT (see Ecclesiastes 5:2; Sir 7:14). It is in this context that Jesus teaches his disciples the Lord's Prayer as an example (or model) of a short prayer with complete trust in God's knowledge and providence.

7. Analysis of the Lord's Prayer as Given by Matthew

According to the Matthean form, first there is an invocation ("Our Father who art in heaven") and then the body of the prayer. The body of the prayer falls into two main parts: the first three "*you*-petitions" (6:9b-10) and the last three "*we*-petitions" (6:11-13).[22] The first three petitions are concerned with the action of God in its cosmic dimension and the last three petitions are concerned with various human needs and God's providential care. The first three petitions are closely related and are prayers to God to act. Only God can sanctify his name; only God can establish his kingdom on earth; only God can create an order in which his will is done by all on earth as in heaven.

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[20] Abhishiktananda, *Saccidananda: A Christian Approach to Advaitic Experience*, revised ed., Delhi: ISPCK, 1984, 65. See V. F. Vineeth, *Yoga of Spirituality: Christian Initiation into Indian Spiritual Traditions*, Bangalore: Vidyavanam Publications, 1995, 27: "The classical Indian spirituality is primarily an inward journey in search of the depths of one's own interiority."

[21] V. F. Vineeth, *Yoga of Spirituality*, 19.

[22] The first three petitions (vv. 9c-10) are more or less parallel in form and all of them end in *sou* ("your") in the Greek original, and, therefore, they are called "you-petitions." They all use divine passives, thus referring to the agency of God in the fulfilment of the petitions. The last three petitions (vv. 11-13) are called "we-petitions" because of the frequent use of the first person plural pronouns.

a. Mt 6:9a: *"Pray then like this"*

It is important to note how Matthew introduces the Lord's Prayer in his Gospel: "Pray then *like* this" (*houtos oun proseuchesthe hymeis*). The use of the adverb *houtos* in the very beginning of the Greek text is very significant. The word *houtos* literally means, "in this way," "in this manner," "like this." This emphatic use of the word implies that the Lord's Prayer is given as an example of *how* to pray, rather than a formula prayer to be mechanically repeated. It also distinguishes the prayer of the disciples from that of others. This might mean that Jesus wants to give his disciples a *model* of prayer and *a pattern* on which they could model other prayers. Lord's Prayer is not the personal prayer of Jesus, but, strictly speaking, the "*Prayer of the Disciples*" and this prayer is meant by Jesus as a brief summing up of his message, which his disciples have to take along on their pilgrimages and apostolic journeys.[23] This prayer, which springs from the heart of the Master and the one in which his heart continues to beat, is his gift to the disciples.[24] The Lord's Prayer is an example of the ideal prayer. An ideal prayer should have two important parts: one devoted to the praise of God and the other devoted to the petitions of humans. In other words, it should have a heavenly dimension as well as an earthly dimension. Jesus has not given his disciples any method or 'technique' for praying, but he has told them *what* to pray and *how* to pray and the attitude they have to adopt when praying. They are to pray for the coming of the Kingdom and they are to pray with an attitude of a child with full faith and trust in the heavenly Father. While this prayer can be said privately, it is essentially a corporate prayer – a community prayer.[25] The request of the disciples at Lk 11:1b, "Lord, teach *us* to pray", shows that Jesus' disciples recognized themselves as a community and that they request of Jesus a prayer, which would bind them together and identify them and in which they would bring to expression their chief and common concerns.

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[23] John M. Oesterreicher, "*Abba*, Father! On the Humanity of Jesus," in Petuchowski and Brocke, eds., *The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy*, 133.

[24] Oesterreicher, "*Abba*, Father!" 134.

[25] According to William Barclay, *The Lord's Prayer*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998, 10, the highest form of prayer is always the prayer of the community. The Jews had always feared selfishness in prayer. It is significant to note that the words, *I, me, my*, and *mine* never appear in the Lord's Prayer.

b. The invocation: "*Our Father who art in heaven*" (6:9b)

The simple form of invocation "*Father*," as given in Lk 11:2, is the more original and it is Jesus' own typical way of addressing God (see Mt 11:25,26; Lk 10:21; 22:42,46). In the 1st century AD both Jews and Greeks addressed God as "Father" (see Wisdom 14:3; Sir 23:1,4; 51:10). Matthew or the Matthean community, in view of the Jewish Christian audience, adapted the simple Lucan form "Father" into "*our* Father *who art in heaven*." This addition well corresponds with the phrase, "*on earth*," which was again added by the post-Easter community to the Matthean version of the third "you-petition": "your will be done *on earth*, as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10b).[26]

It was characteristic of Jesus to pray to God addressing Him as *Abba* ("Father").[27] The term "*Abba*" was so original with Jesus that it was transmitted to us in its Aramaic form in Mark 14:36; Rom 8:15; and Gal 4:6. *Abba* is a term of special affection and intimacy. It connotes the intimate personal relation of Jesus to God. For Jesus, "Father" means the One who loves (Jn 3:16; 14:23; 1 Jn 4:10), forgives (see Lk 15:11-32) and knows how to give good gifts to his children (Mt 7:11). Jesus many times spoke with God as a son would with his father in an intimate and filial manner (see Mt 11:25-27; Lk 10:21-22).

In the Israelite tradition the title "*Father*" (Hebrew: *`āb*) is used as an appellation for its covenantal God and it originates mostly in the exilic or post-exilic period (Dt 32:6; Is 63:16; 64:8; Jer 3:19; 31:9).[28] The "Father-Mother" figure of God is very powerfully expressed in Hos 11:1-4 and Jer 31:20. Hence, it was no new truth that Jesus was revealing to his audience. However, Jesus has given a new depth and dimension to the notion of Fatherhood of God. First of all, Jesus empowers us to address God with the same endearing title, *Abba*, which he used in addressing

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[26] Vögtle, "*The Lord's Prayer*," 106.

[27] Joachim Jeremias rightly understands the Aramaic *Abba* as the *ipsissima vox Jesu* ("Jesus' own utterance"), that is, Jesus actually used the invocation *Abba* and it was not simply attributed to him by the early Church, *The Prayers of Jesus*, Studies in Biblical Theology, Second Series, No. 6, ET, London: SCM Press, 1967, 57.

[28] According to A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke*, International Critical Commentary, Edinburg: Clark, 1896, 296, God as Father of Israel is an OT image; the concept of God as Father to individual people begins to appear in intertestamental Judaism.

God. We do not find *Abba* as a form of address to God in any prayer of the Old Testament nor do we find any prayer that begins with the expression, "Father" or "Our Father." This is what we find in the Lord's Prayer and this is something unique to it. Secondly, Jesus, through his teaching in parables, has emphasized more powerfully than in the OT the love, care, and mercy of God the Father.

According to Joachim Jeremias, at the time of Jesus, children were used to call their father *Abba*, and, thus, it was the language of children.[29] He also observes that there is no instance in Jewish prayer literature of the vocative *Abba* being addressed to God and this is because, to the Jewish mind, it would have been disrespectful and therefore inconceivable to address God with this familiar word.[30] "For Jesus to venture to take up this step was something new and unheard of. He spoke to God like a child to its father, simply, inwardly, confidently; Jesus' use of *Abba* in addressing God reveals the heart of his relationship with God."[31] "*Abba*, Father!" was the ceaseless prayer of Jesus and the remembrance of the Father was constantly in the heart and mind of Jesus. "Father" was the first word Jesus uttered in the Gospels (Lk 2:49) and it was his last word on earth (Lk 23:46). Jesus' address to God as *Abba* implies not only his filial and familiar relationship with God but also his total obedience and surrender to the Father. In Jesus' prayers, *Abba* is not only an expression of obedience and trust but also a firm sign of his unlimited abandonment to his Father's will, which is all-powerful. This is what we see in his prayer at Gethsemane (Mk 14:36). If we take the clause, "all things are possible to you," as part of the address, "*Abba*, Father," then we could translate thus, *Abba*, Father, You are the all-powerful One![32] This supreme power that rules everything in this world is the power of love. At Gethsemane this love of the Father has become a 'suffering love', a love that 'suffers' for the salvation of humanity. The title, "Father," expresses God's innermost being that is his love in which humans find security and peace.

In the Lord's Prayer Jesus authorizes his disciples to address God as "*Abba*, Father" after him. This means that Jesus gives the disciples "a share in his sonship and empowers them, as his disciples, to speak with their heavenly Father in just such a familiar, trusting way as a child would with his father."[33] Jesus, thus, makes this invocation "*Abba*, Father" as the very centre of their life of prayer and makes it their most cherished *mantra*, keeping it constantly on their lips, in their minds, and above all, in their hearts. By so doing, they will not only follow Jesus' example but also will share in what is deepest in him and central to his life and mission in relation to the Father and to all humankind.[34] Since Jesus distinguishes between "*My Father*" and "*your Father*" (Mt 7:11,21; Jn 20:17) Jesus' use of *Abba* expresses a special relationship with God. Here we have to remember that we, the adopted children of God, need an additional power to address God as "Father" and this power is given through the Holy Spirit who is dwelling within us (see Rom 8:14-17; Gal 4:4-7).

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[29] Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 59-60.
[30] Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 60, 62.
[31] Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 62.
[32] Oesterreicher, "*Abba*, Father!" 125.

The first consequence of the realization of the Fatherhood of God is the recognition of the true brotherhood of humanity. Since God has adopted us as sons, we can and we must adopt each other as brothers and sisters (see Mt 23:8-9). The use of the first person plural "we," "our," and "us" throughout the Lord's Prayer presupposes that "this fraternal inclusiveness is taken for granted through the fatherhood of God."[35] The Fatherhood of God would be infringed if it did not include love and care for our fellow brethren.

The invocation, "*Our* Father who art *in heaven*" brings both immanence and transcendence. The One whom we call *Father* is at the same time supremely great: "*God is in heaven, and you upon earth*" (Ecclesiastes 5:2). What is implied here is the deep sense of holiness and majesty of God.[36] We address God intimately as *Father*, but we immediately recognize his infinite greatness. The invocation, thus, fuses together the idea of fatherly love and kingly authority, intimacy and majesty.

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[33] Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 97.

[34] Abhishiktananda, *Prayer*, 126.

[35] Jean Carmignac, "*The Spiritual Wealth of the Lord's Prayer*," in Petuchowski and Brocke, eds., *The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy*, 140.

[36] Donald Coggan, *The Prayers of the New Testament*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1967, 21.

c. The first petition: *"hallowed be your name"* (6:9c)

This petition is a prayer for the holiness of God to be acknowledged by all. The word "*hallow*" means "to honour as holy." The clause in its Greek original literally means, "*let your name be sanctified.*" What is meant by "God's *name*"? The "name" in biblical language sums up a person's whole character; it stands for the person himself (see Acts 4:12). The "name" of God refers to what God is in himself and also to what God is to others. When we know God's name, he really becomes God for us, that is, he ceases to be a mysterious unknown power and becomes a person with significance for our lives, helping us and challenging us (see Jer 16:21; Ps 83:18; read Is 52:6 along with 60:16). The expression, "hallowed be your name," does not mean that the God needs some sort of sanctification; He is all holy; "holy is his name" (Lk 1:49). "Holiness is the very essence of God." Even though God is thrice "holy" (Is 6:3) and his holiness expresses the infinite 'distance' between Him and his creatures, it in no way excludes that intimate nearness which links creature and the Creator. For Hosea tells us: "I am the Holy One in your midst" (11:9). Here "we are faced with the problem of the transcendence of a God who is yet totally immanent, transcendent to his creation because He is utterly independent of it, yet immanent because the creation is totally dependent on Him."[37]

The revelation of God's Name in Ex 3:14 constitutes the core of the first petition. God steps out of his transcedence and indefinability by means of his Name and thus acquires personal traits, which reveal a face that turns towards humans.[38] The passive *hagiasthētō* is to be interpreted as a divine passive, that is, God himself is requested to sanctify his name, and not the humans. Humans' way of sanctifying God's name is by acknowledging God's supremacy and rule in their life and co-operating in his plan of salvation. Hallowing God's name is in the first instance an act on the part of God himself (see Ezek 36:23). God hallows his name not by punishing his people who profaned his name, but by working redemption and salvation for his people (Ezek 36:24-29; 39:25-27). It is in this perspective that the first petition of the Lord's Prayer is to be interpreted.

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[37] Thomas Corbishley, *The Prayer of Jesus*, London: Mowbrays, 1976, 84.

[38] Alfons Deissler, "*The Spirit of Lord's Praye in the Faith and Worship of the Old Testament*," in Petuchowski and Brocke, eds., *The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy*, 7.

When we pray "*hallowed be your name*," we are, thus, praying God to act, to reveal who he is, namely, to reveal himself as Saviour. However, God does not sanctify his name without the co-operation of humans. In this sense, both God and humans are responsible for the sanctification of God's name. God sanctifies his name by his mighty and saving acts and humans should hallow it by their acknowledgement of God as their Saviour and Master and by living in accordance with his will, by loving and serving our fellow humans who are in real need. But what takes place in today's world is the profanation of God's name. When the poor are crushed, when the widows are denied their rights, when unjust balances are used in business, when sexual immorality prevails (see Amos 2:7, "A man and his father go in to the same maiden, so that my holy name is profaned") it is God's name that is profaned.[39] Here again God must step in to hallow his name, and God's action of sanctification calls for a reciprocal action on the part of his people. This is what we pray for in this petition. Jesus has "hallowed the name of the Father" by *manifesting* it (Jn 17:6). Jesus' words and actions were such that when people saw him, they saw the Father (see Jn 14:9). A Christ-like character is the best way of hallowing the name of God.[40] The ultimate glorification and sanctification of God's name is a future reality and this will take place in the final coming of God's kingdom.

d. The second petition: "*Your Kingdom Come*" (6:10a)

The central message of Jesus' whole preaching is "*the kingdom of heaven*." Though "the kingdom of God" is the central theme of Jesus' preaching, he has never defined it. "Kingdom" is a verbal noun and the phrase "*the kingdom of God*" means primarily "*God's reign*," "*God's rule*." When we pray, "Your kingdom come," we pray for the acknowledgement of God's sovereign rule by all people in their lives. Only when his sovereign rule is acknowledged by all will God's name be wholly sanctified. The eschatological nature of the whole prayer is focused on this one petition. It is true that in each of the petitions, there is also a present dimension. For Jesus and his disciples, the kingdom was not only a future reality at the end of the world, but a present experience. God as a sovereign King loves justice (Ps 33:5), executes justice (Ps 99:4) and sees to it that the weak and the orphan get justice (Ps 82:3). When we pray, "Your kingdom come," we are praying for a kingdom where justice and love, so miserably denied in this age, will rule harmoniously.

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[39] Coggan, *The Prayers of the New Testament*, 24.

[40] Coggan, *The Prayers of the New Testament*, 24.

To pray this prayer is to ask for something deeper and wider than the mere extension of the Church. The kingdom of God, understood as God's sovereign rule, has a very wider dimension than the Church or even the people of God. God as the Creator of the universe and the King of all the nations, his sovereignty may be advanced even in the so-called secular areas through those who are unconscious of being its agents. For example, the scientists who, though not believers in God, make new inventions against various diseases are, unwittingly, advancing the spread of the Kingdom. The politicians who lay the foundations of a peaceful society are advancing the Kingdom, inasmuch as God is a God of order and peace. The writers who, though not Christians, produce beautiful literary works with genuine human values, advance the Kingdom. Whatever humans do in advancing the boundaries of beauty, truth, and goodness (see Phil 4:8), there the Kingdom comes. Wherever the forces of sin, darkness, disease, and hatred are removed, there the Kingdom comes, and God enters in more fully to the world of his creation.[41]

The petition, "your kingdom come," could be interpreted as a prayer for others – those outside the circle of Jesus' followers – to experience God's rule in their lives; or it could be interpreted as a prayer for the disciples themselves to experience God's rule intensively in their lives and to come to its consummation in the future. But it is better that the prayer be understood in both the senses and we ask God to establish it in the life of every human being. When the Christians pray this prayer they look *up* and look *forward* – *up* to the God who reigns, and *forward* to the day when his Son Jesus Christ destroys completely the rule of evil powers and delivers the kingdom to God his Father (1 Cor 15:24).

e. The third petition: "*Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*" (6:10b)

Luke omits this petition, probably because it adds practically nothing to the preceding petition.[42] The suggestion made by some authors that

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[41] Coggan, *The Prayers of the New Testament*, 25.

[42] Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33A, Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1993, 148.

Matthew has taken Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane ("Your will be done," Mt 26:42) and inserted it here has been rejected by Raymond Brown and others.[43] The will of God as sovereign King permeates all history; even human sin cannot thwart it. Joseph, in the OT, could tell his brothers, "Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good" Gen 50:20). God's will is intensely a will for the salvation of humanity (Jer 29:11; Ezek 18:23,32; 1 Thess 4:3). It is only through God's intervening action that his will perfectly be done on earth. But this does not mean that humans have no commitment or engagement in history; in fact, the inevitable requirement of doing God's will is the co-operation of humans with God. The humans are God's earthly partners in the unfolding and realization of His will in history. The fulfilment of God's will demands loving even one's own personal enemies and this demand is only intensified in Jesus' words and actions.

Before teaching this prayer, "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" to his disciples, Jesus certainly lived in its very spirit. First of all, Jesus learned its spirit from his own mother, Mary whose whole life was a *fiat* to God (Lk 1:38). Jesus' whole life was permeated with the spirit of this prayer: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work" (Jn 4:34). One could ask here, what was concretely the will of God for Jesus? For him, the unmistakable will of God is to establish God's rule on earth, which was the work entrusted to him by his Father (see Lk 4:43). In this sense, the petition, "your will be done" repeats and intensifies the previous petition, "your kingdom come."

Doing the will of God could be understood both passively and actively; passively, it means to accept whatever may happen to one; and actively, it means to join in the struggle against powers of evil - political, social and moral.[44] In his life Jesus accepted God's will both passively and actively. Whatever sufferings he had to undergo in his life, he accepted them as the will of his Father (see Mt 26:42). Jesus' going out throughout Galilee "*doing good*" is the execution of God's will in the active sense. The Gospels are full of stories of the way in which Jesus 'did good' by liberating people from different forms of suffering and distress. Hence, when we pray "Your will be done" we are reminded and challenged to join hand in hand with Christ in "doing good" by bringing wholeness in the life of our suffering brethren.

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[43] Raymond E. Brown, "The Pater Noster as an Eschatological Prayer," in *New Testament Essays*, Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1965, 235. He takes support from H. Schürmann, see 235, note 69. Brown, however, suspects that Matthew might have used this petition to fill in the actual words of the prayer at Gethsemane, because we do not find this clause in the Marcan parallel in 14:39.

[44] Corbishley, *The Prayer of Jesus*, 95.

"Your will be done, *on earth as it is in heaven*": We need to make a distinction between the "*absolute will*" of God – what God desires simply because it is good – and the "*permissive will*" of God.[45] The "absolute will" of God is always related to his nature and to his eternal plan of salvation. In the "permissive will" of God the human actions are also involved. Whatever happens in the world happens because of the choices humans make and these human choices God certainly respects. At the same time humans are given the knowledge and the ability to make the right choices. When they do so, they are carrying out God's absolute will on earth. But often humans, because of selfishness, through greed or passion or insensitivity, make wrong choices and do their own will. In this case humans are thwarting the absolute will of God. Since God does not overrule humans' decisions and since God respects the freedom he has given to humans, the wrong choices humans make are tolerated or permitted by God. When, therefore, we pray that "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" we are really praying for his absolute will (or purpose) to be realized. Hence, it is we who have the responsibility for carrying out God's absolute will by making the right choices, by acting in accordance with the deepest and most authentic needs of our nature. For, God's will is not something that goes contrary to our own truest will.[46]

f. The fourth petition: "*Give us this day our daily bread*" (6:11)

After the three "you-petitions" which are wholly God-centred, we now come to the three "we-petitions" where our own specific needs are brought before God, asking Him for the basic things of life: food, forgiveness, guidance and deliverance from evil. The last three petitions can be understood as a prayer for our physical and spiritual well-being. In the first three "you-petitions" the eyes of the disciples have been turned towards God. Prayer should always begin, centring on God who is most holy, all loving, all-powerful. We should not rush into God's presence with a list of our wants. Acknowledgement and praise of God's majesty and greatness, expression of awe before his holiness, sincere effort to align our wills with His – this is where we have to begin. Then we may turn to God with our petitions, which express our absolute dependence on God. He who is our Creator is also our Sustainer. We depend on Him for each moment of our existence and for each day's sustenance.

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[45] Corbishley, *The Prayer of Jesus*, 91.

[46] Corbishley, *The Prayer of Jesus*, 92.

The Greek text of the fourth petition is important to note: *ton arton hēmōn ton episousion dos hēmin sēmeron*. Our understanding of the petition depends on how we interpret the unusual adjective *episousios*, modifying "bread." This Greek word occurs only here and in the parallel passage in Lk 11:3 and nowhere else in the NT. One could understand the Greek word *episousios* mainly in two ways. Firstly, *episousios* = *epi ousia*, means "for existence."[47] The meaning in this case is clear enough: "give us today the bread necessary for existence." For the poor people among whom Jesus lived and worked, it would be difficult to exclude the natural, this worldly meaning. The prayer represents Jesus' own solidarity with the poor and his concern that they have the minimal means of survival. Praying this petition, the Church unites with the hungry and poor of the world, and, hence, this prayer is a challenge and invitation to those who have bread to share with those who have not.

The second way of understanding of *episousios* = *epiousa* (*hēmera*), is "*for the coming day*" or "*for the following day*."[48] Bread "for the coming day" could be interpreted as bread for the "*great tomorrow*." Hence, the meaning of the prayer is "the bread *of tomorrow*, give us *today*"; this interpretation is supported by the fact that it produces a contrast between *episousios* and *sēmeron* in the petition. This is again paralleled in the following petition in the contrast between divine and human forgiveness. J. Jeremias and R. E. Brown interpret "the coming day" as the day of the eschatological banquet (see Mt 8:11) and understand this prayer as the prayer for the bread of the coming kingdom.[49] Since the bread of the kingdom is promised to the Christians, they could pray for it as "*our bread.*" The disciples should pray for the experience of the messianic banquet and the eschatological blessing day after day.

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[47] The Greek word *ousia* is derived from *ousa*, which is the present participle feminine of *eimi*, and means, "that which is one's own," "one's substance," "one's being," "one's existence."

[48] The Greek term *epiousa* is the present participle of the verb *epeimi*, meaning "to come after," "to approach."

[49] Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 100-101; Brown, "The Pater Noster," 240-243.

The material bread that God gives today symbolizes and foreshadows and causes one to desire for the spiritual, eschatological bread.[50] According to J. Jeremias, "there was no opposition between earthly bread and the bread of life, for in the realm of the *basileia* all earthly things are hallowed... For the disciples of Jesus, every meal, and not only the last one, had deep eschatological significance. Every meal with Jesus was a salvation meal, an anticipation of the final feast. At every meal he was the host, as he would be at the consummation."[51]

Here we should keep in mind the possibility that the Lord's Prayer was already in Matthew's time recited in connection with the Eucharistic celebration. Indeed, the word "*bread*" (*artos*), along with the verb "*give*" (*didōmi*), appears again only in the context of the feeding of the five thousand (Mt 14:19) and of institution of the Eucharist (Mt 26:26), the first one alluding probably to the Last Supper. Saint Jerome, in his Latin translation of the Bible (the Vulgate) used the word *supersubstantialis* (literally, "the bread above the substance") and the use of this Latin word enabled many in the early Church to see the petition as a reference to the Eucharist. But this interpretation brings in later concepts into the passage.[52] It is better that we take a multiplicity of meanings for "bread": physical food, the word of God, and the Eucharist. Jean Carmignac rightly understands this petition for bread as a petition for threefold nourishment: nourishment for the body, the word of God and the Christ of the Eucharist.[53] Hence this petition embraces everything that Jesus' disciples need for body and soul. In the Lucan version we have the expression "*each day*" (11:3), which indicates the repeated needs of our daily lives. Each moment of our life we are in need of God's help for everything.

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[50] W. D. Davis and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, The International Critical Commentary Series, eds. J. A. Emerson et alii, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988, 609.

[51] Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, trans. John Bowden. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1971, 200.

[52] Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 149.

[53] Recherches sur le "Notre Père," 118-221, as referred to in Vögtle, "*The Lord's Prayer*," 99.

Thus, in this petition we express our total dependence on a loving Father who supplies for every need of our lives.

"Give us..." Who is '*us*'? We should give it the widest possible interpretation. In this prayer we have to align ourselves with all our fellow-brethren all over the world who are hungry and in need of food.[54] We will be thoroughly misunderstanding the petition for bread if we consider it merely as a call to God's obligation to maintain and nurture us, instead of letting it obligate us to share our bread with our hungry brethren.[55] Thus, the prayer for "bread" carries with it a social dimension, namely, sharing one's bread with the hungry (see Is 58:7; Ezek 18:7). "Mere personal satisfaction of hunger without considering the others would be a breach of that fellowship."[56] It is significant that in this prayer, Jesus does not use the word *love* at all. But he does show an interest and concern for people that they get enough to eat. This active concern for others itself is love.[57]

g. The fifth petition: "*And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*" (6:12)

The second "we-petition" has two parts; the first part, "*forgive us our debts*" refers to divine activity and the second, "*as we also have forgiven our debtors*" refers to human activity. This kind of formulation as referring to divine and human activity placed side by side occurs only here in the Lord's Prayer. Since this petition is unique in its formulation, the Matthean Jesus wanted to put great emphasis on it.[58] This petition focuses on an important aspect of our Christian life: reconciliation among ourselves and with God the Father. In the first part of the petition we ask God's forgiveness for our "debts." The word "debt" usually means "what is owed," or "one's due" (as in Dt 24:10; Rom 4:4). The religious use of the term "*debts*" to describe sins against God is common in Jewish writings.[59] Luke has changed "debts" (*ta opheilēmata*) into "sins" (*tas hamartias*), probably to make the petition more intelligible for his Gentile Christian readers.[60] The use of plural with the definite article, *ta opheilēmata,* indicates that a complete remission of all debts is intended. Since God is the addressee of this prayer what is requested is not only the remission of all debts regarding money and material things but also moral and spiritual debts, that is, guilt and sins.[61] Only God can forgive all the debts, guilt and sins. When we pray, "*forgive us our debts*," we acknowledge and confess our sinfulness before God. Sin is an offence against God and our neighbour and it affects all our relationships. Hence, it must be forgiven in order that our relationships with God and our neighbour are re-established.

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[54] Leonardo Boff, *The Lord's Prayer: The Prayer of Integral Liberation*, Eng. trans. Theodore Morrow, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985, 77, "When we present God with our own needs, he wants us to include those of our brothers and sisters. Otherwise the bonds of fellowship are severed and we live for only ourselves."

[55] Vögtle, "*The Lord's Prayer*," 109.

[56] Boff, *The Lord's Prayer*, 77. The bread that is meant to nourish the "human life," is to be the bread of justice blessed by God. Boff writes: "When the bread that we eat is the result of exploitation, it is not a bread blessed by God. ... Unjust bread is not really our bread; it is stolen; it belongs to someone else," *Lord's Prayer*, 77-78.

[57] Coggan, *The Prayers of the New Testament*, 31.

[58] Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 201.

The second part of the petition, "*as we also have forgiven our debtors*," has no strict parallel in any of the Proto-canonical books of the OT; but we have one text parallel to this in Sir 28:2 where we read: "Forgive your neighbour the wrong he had done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray." This text of Sirach implies that "God's forgiveness is valid only for him who previously reconciled himself with his fellow men."[62] Jesus' demand on the part of his disciples to forgive the debts of their fellow brethren is seen as an indispensable presupposition for the petition for divine forgiveness. One who asks for divine forgiveness should show his/her genuine preparedness for forgiving others. This part of the petition is one of most difficult one to interpret because of the conjunction "*as*" which seems to mean that "our forgiveness" of our fellow brethren is a motivation and reason for God to forgive our sins! But such an idea is not present anywhere in the Bible except here and in Mt 6:14-15, Lk 11:4 and Mk 11:25. This difficult clause has been approached and interpreted by many scholars and it is helpful to see the different views expressed by some of them.

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[59] Davis and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 611: In the religious sense, "debt" takes on the meaning of "sin" because "sin makes one indebted to God."

[60] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 28A, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1985, 906.

[61] Thomas Kaut, "Father and Tempter? The Lord's Prayer to the One and Only God," in *Melita Theologica*, 44,1 (2003), 3-30, 20.

[62] Vögtle, "*The Lord's Prayer*," 107.

Joachim Jeremias, while dealing with the difficult question of the interrelationship between divine and human forgiveness, asks: "Does our forgiveness precede God's forgiveness? Is it the model for God's forgiveness?"[63] How could Jesus' disciples compare their poor forgiving with God's infinite mercy and forgiveness? According to him, this part of the petition is a declaration of readiness to forgive, which is seen by him as an "indispensable prior condition" (*conditio sine qua non*) for receiving God's forgiveness.[64] "How can one ask God for forgiveness, if one is not also prepared to forgive (Mk 11:25; Matt. 6:14-15; 18:35)? … Forgiveness – one's own readiness to forgive and request for forgiveness where one has committed an offence – is *the* presupposition for the prayer of Jesus' disciples."[65] According to him, God can forgive only if we are ready to forgive (Mk 11:25) and the "willingness to forgive is, so to speak, the hand which Jesus' disciples reach out toward God's forgiveness."[66] In Luke the Matthean past tense is replaced by the present: "for we ourselves *forgive everyone* indebted to us"; this indicates the continuing aspect of our forgiving attitude. The reference to "everyone" indicates that we have to forgive all persons without exception.

Norman Perrin, the famous NT American scholar, makes an important observation that in ancient Judaism he has not seen any prayer that links a petition for divine forgiveness with a human preparedness to forgive.[67] Perrin argues that the aorist *aphēkamen* in the second part of this petition represents the Aramaic *perfectum praesens*, which indicates an action that takes place at the same time as the action of the previous verb ("forgive us") and must be translated "as we *herewith* forgive."[68] This means that the act of divine forgiveness and the act of human forgiveness are contemporaneous and go hand in hand. In the face of the divine forgiveness the human person accepts fully the responsibility to forgive his/her fellow brethren. "In the context of God's forgiveness men learn to forgive, and in the exercise of forgiveness toward their fellow man they enter ever more deeply into an experience of the divine forgiveness."[69] According to Perrin, Mt 6:14-15 does not come from the historical Jesus, but it appears to be the teaching of the early Church which legalizes the linking of the human preparedness to forgive with the reception of divine forgiveness.[70]

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[63] Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 201

[64] Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 201, see also 192

[65] Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 201, 192-193.

[66] *The Prayers of Jesus*, 103.

[67] Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1976, 47.

[68] Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, 152.

George M. Soares-Prabhu, a renowned Bible scholar of India, acknowledges the fact that the NT consistently relates our forgiveness to God's forgiveness and tries to interpret the human readiness to forgive as demanded by the Lord's Prayer as a religious attitude rooted in the core Christian experience of an utterly forgiving God.[71] Mt 6:12, along with Mt 6:14-15, Lk 11:4, and Mk 11:25, seem to make our forgiveness a precondition for God's forgiveness. But human forgiveness cannot be a condition for meriting God's pardon, but a paradigm for, or rather a concomitant of it.[72] His explanation of the dialectical interdependence of the divine-human forgiveness is complementary to what Norman Perrin suggested in terms of "contemporaneity of the action." All forgiveness, like all love, originates from God, who has loved and forgiven us first (Mt 18:23-35; 1 Jn 4:7,21). When we forgive our neighbour, God's forgiveness is made perfect in us. That is, our experience of God's forgiveness is intensified, and our capacity to forgive is augmented. Our failure to respond to God's forgiveness closes us up to His forgiveness. Human forgiveness is, thus, both a consequence of our being forgiven by

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[69] Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, 153. On the same page he writes that the recognition of this "contemporaneity of the action" is absolutely crucial to understand the teaching of Jesus. "This is not only the crux of the teaching of Jesus about forgiveness; it is also the key to understand the 'ethical' teaching of Jesus altogether: as men learn to live their lives in the context of their experience of the divine activity, so they must learn to live them in terms of the appropriate response to that activity. In the case of forgiveness, that response is to forgive; in the case of love, it is to love."

[70] Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, 151. According to Boring, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 205, Mt 6:14-15 is entirely derived from Matthew's special material (M material), or more likely Matthean redaction.

[71] Soares-Prabhu, "As We Forgive," 57.

[72] Soares-Prabhu, "As We Forgive," 57. Here Soares-Prabhu comes very close to the "contemporaneity of the action" suggested by Norman Perrin.

God, and (at a second level) a condition for it. Our relationship with God is normally mediated through human relationships. We love God by loving our neighbour; we experience God's forgiveness by forgiving our brothers and sisters.[73]

Thomas Kaut, a translation consultant with the United Bible Societies and based in Bonn, Germany, approaches this petition from a different perspective.[74] The petition for divine forgiveness in the first clause is conditioned by the second clause, "*as* we also have forgiven our debtors." But none of the other petitions in Lord's Prayer is formulated in this way. The other petitions do not even allow for such a condition, except possibly the petition for bread, which could have been formulated as: "Give us this day our daily bread, as we also have given bread to those in need!"[75] But it does not do so.

The second part of the petition begins with the conjunction "*as*" and the corresponding Greek word "*hōs*" here means "inasmuch as," "since," or "on the ground that." Hence this part of the petition functions here as causal clause, which could be translated: "And forgive us our debts, *inasmuch as* we also have forgiven our debtors." This means that human willingness or even the past act of forgiveness serves as a precondition in order to receive forgiveness from God; even worse, the correlative function of the causal conjunction implies an equal measure of forgiveness: "Forgive us…, *inasmuch as we have forgiven.*"[76] Human forgiveness here tends to become a means whereby we earn God's forgiveness, as is happening in Mt 6:14-15.[77]

Putting such precondition to receive God's forgiveness stands not only against the teaching of Jesus, but also against the Jewish and early Christian thinking.[78] According to Thomas Kaut, this clause was added later due to the use of Lord's Prayer in the liturgical services, especially the celebration of the Eucharist.[79] *Didache* alludes to the practice of confessing one's sins during the celebration of the Eucharist before the communion. In *Didache* XIV.,1-2 we read: "On the Lord's Day of the Lord come together, break bread and hold Eucharist, *after confessing your transgressions* that your offering may be pure; but let none who has a quarrel with his fellow join in your meeting *until they be reconciled*, that your sacrifice be not defiled." It is probably this liturgical context of confessing one's sins and receiving forgiveness from God and extending, in turn, forgiveness to the brothers and sisters present in the liturgical assembly that this part of the petition in Lord's Prayer is referred to.[80]

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[73] Soares-Prabhu, "As We Forgive," 57-59.

[74] Kaut, "Father and Tempter?" 3-30.

[75] Kaut, "Father and Tempter?" 9, note 15.

[76] Kaut, "Father and Tempter?" 22.

[77] Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, 153.

[78] Kaut, "Father and Tempter?" 22. According to Philip B. Harner, *Understanding the Lord's Prayer*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975, 104-105, Jewish prayers of the time did not connect God's forgiveness with human forgiveness. Indeed, Jesus did not make this connection in his teaching on forgiveness, the only exceptions being Mt 6:14-15, Lk 11:11:4, Mk 11:25 and the

As is already mentioned, the clause, "*as* we also have forgiven our debtors" seems to imply that God's forgiveness of our sins and debts is conditioned by our forgiveness to our fellow brethren. And Jesus' own interpretation given to this petition in Mt 6:14-15 also implies this.[81] But this seems to be at variance with Jesus' own teaching which reveals very powerfully to what extent, exceeding all human expectations, God is ready to forgive our sins. The parable of the "Prodigal Son" (Lk 15:11-32) illustrates very beautifully the loving mercy of God who forgives without demanding any condition from the son. The father of the parable was waiting for the return of the son and when he saw him even at a distance,

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parable of the Unforgiving Servant in Mt 18:23-35. Mt 6:14-15 may be interpreted in the sense that God's forgiveness can become real for humans only when they are willing to forgive one another. But the parable of the Unforgiving Servant suggests that God's forgiveness precedes human forgiveness. First God forgives humans their sins, and then He expects them to forgive one another. The human forgiveness is a reflection and consequence of God's forgiveness.

[79] Kaut, "Father and Tempter?" 23. On pages 17-18, note 32, he also gives some syntactical and critical reasons for the interpolation of this clause. This is the only petition where the correlative conjunction "as" (*hōs*) is used subordinating the following clause to the main clause. Syntactical subordination is alien to Lord's Prayer. Secondly, the subject of this clause is human persons, "we" (*hēmeis*), whereas in all the petitions of the Lord's Prayer the only subject is God. Again, the predicate, "have forgiven" (*aphēkamen*) is the only non-imperative predicate in the Lord's Prayer.

[80] Kaut, "Father and Tempter?" 25.

[81] According to Kaut, the text of Mt 6:14-15 does not so much articulate a condition, but rather a *motivation*. "Father and Tempter?" 22, note 40.

he "had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him" (Lk 15:20). When the father got a chance to love and forgive, he did it in its sublime form. This is how God is to us who are his children! The parable of the "Lost Sheep" (Lk 15:3-7) also brings out very well God's readiness to forgive without any pre-condition. When the sheep is lost (when the sinner goes away from God) it is God himself who takes the initiative in going after it "*until* he finds it" (Lk 15:4). The clause, "until he finds it" means that *until* the search is successful! This means again that before God every human person is immensely valuable and precious and that God wants him or her to be in his fellowship. God by his very nature is a loving and forgiving God without any condition. This is what we see in the beautiful prayer of Daniel: "We do not present our supplications before you on the ground of our righteousness, but on the ground of your great mercy. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive" (Dan 9:18-19; see also Ps 78:38).

God's unconditional forgiveness motivates and stimulates us to extend our forgiveness to our fellow humans. This is how Paul has understood; for he writes in Col 3:13b: "As the Lord has forgiven you (divine action in the past), so you must forgive" (corresponding human action in the present). Here the human forgiveness is seen not as a condition but as a consequence of the forgiveness received from God and the divine forgiveness is to be a model for humans.[82] However, human forgiveness is by no means a precondition or a prerequisite to receive forgiveness for himself from God.[83]

To conclude our study on divine-human forgiveness, God's boundless mercy is not comparable with man's limited capacity for forgiving others. Hence this petition does not mean that we compel God to look upon us with favour because of our forgiveness of others. It does mean, however, that when we have a non-forgiving attitude towards others, we put an obstacle between God and us so that his love and forgiveness cannot flow into us. Mt 6:14-15 emphasizes well the point of this petition in such an hyperbolic way that the need of human forgiveness can easily be understood by his disciples. The message of these verses is that it is unthinkable that we can enjoy God's forgiveness without in turn extending our forgiveness towards others. "The binding of human forgiveness to God's ... expresses Matthew's dialectical understanding of forgiveness. God's forgiveness is unconditional, precedes human forgiveness of other human beings, and is its ground and cause. Yet prayer for God's forgiveness is unthinkable for one who is intentionally an unforgiving person."[84] This is what we find powerfully expressed in the parable of the Unforgiving Servant in Mt 18:23-35. Just as love does not become a reality until it "reaches another," so God's forgiveness of our sins cannot become a reality until it takes effect in our interpersonal relationship. In other words, a forgiven person is to be a forgiving person. Forgiveness is not a one-dimensional reality, a one-way journey. When we ask forgiveness from God and receive it from him, it must set us in motion towards our fellow brethren.[85] It calls for personal and social responses from us. What is stressed in this clause is the correspondence between our praying and our living. "Forgiveness may be one of the hardest of all gifts to offer to others. Had it been easy, it would not have needed so prominent a place in the prayer of Jesus."[86]

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[82] According to Raymond E. Brown, "The Pater Noster," 248, "the Matthean 'as' simply means that the human forgiveness is the counterpart of the divine."

[83] Kaut, "Father and Tempter?" 22.

h. The sixth petition: "*And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil*" (6:13)

This is the only petition in the Lord's Prayer that is formulated in the negative. The expression, "*And lead not into temptation*," could be taken as to imply that God himself tempts us. But the Letter of James had already rejected this misunderstanding (1:13). The expression "lead us not" here has a "permissive sense": "Do not let us fall victim."[87] If we interpret this petition in terms of daily deliverance from temptation, then the prayer is directed not to preservation *from* temptation but to preservation *in* temptation, as J. Jeremias puts it rightly.[88] If we take the second meaning, then this petition does not request that he who prays this prayer might be spared from temptation altogether, but that God might help him to overcome it. Here it is significant to note that the corresponding Greek word *peirasmos* could mean, either "temptation" as in Lk 4:13 or it could mean "test," "trial" or "ordeal" as in 1 Pet 4:12. God may "test" his children with hope of good outcome (Ex 20:20; Dt 8:2; 1 Thess 2:4; 1 Tim 3:10; Heb 11:17).[89]

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[84] Boring, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 204-205.

[85] Jan Milič Lochman, *The Lord's Prayer*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990, 120.

[86] R. E. Clements, *The Prayers of the Bible*, London: SCM Press, 1986, 245.

[87] Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 202

[88] *The Prayers of Jesus*, 105.

But scholars like J. Jeremias and R. E. Brown give also an eschatological interpretation to this petition and say that this petition does not merely deal with daily temptations, but also with the final temptation.[90] The two reasons they bring forward are: (1) the use of aorist tenses (*eisenenkēs* and *rhysai*), and (2) the use of the word *peirasmos* ("temptation"). Though the word *peirasmos* can refer to ordinary temptation (Lk 8:13), it has specialized reference to the eschatological trial. The everyday "*peirasmos*" is already a part of the struggle of Christian life, which will climax in the final "*peirasmos*" (see Rev 3:10 which contains an eschatological promise of Christ). Hence, this part of the petition is a request for the preservation from succumbing to the eschatological trial, and, thus, from apostasy, that is, falling away from one's relationship with God.[91] Some others interpret this petition as a request imploring the divine help to prevent the disciples from succumbing to the power of sin.[92] This interpretation has the value of making this petition relevant for the present and for the future. The petition reflects a spirit of total dependence on God, as does the whole prayer.

The second part of the petition is a prayer about deliverance from the power of "evil": "*But deliver us from evil" - alla rhysai hēmas apo tou ponērou*. The Greek expression, *apo tou ponērou* could mean either "from evil" *apo tou ponēro*u (the genitive *tou ponēro*u can come from the neuter *to ponēron* meaning "*evil*" or "what is evil") or "from *the evil one*" (coming from the masculine *ho ponēros*, "the evil one"). The Western

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[89] The action of the Holy Spirit and the presence of devil in Mt 4:1 give the verbal form *peirazō* a double connotation: Jesus is at the same being "tested" by God and "tempted" by the devil, see Davis and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 360. Paul gives us the assurance that "God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested (*peirasthēnai*) beyond your strength" (1 Cor 10:13).

[90] Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 105-106; Brown, "The Pater Noster," 248-251.

[91] Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 202.

[92] Darrell L. Bock, *Luke, Vol 2: 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Moisés Silva, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996, 1056; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary, Exeter: The Pater Noster Press, 1978, 461-462.

Fathers support the former translation ("from evil") and the Greek Fathers, along with Tertullian, support the latter ("from the evil one").[93] The NRSV appears to have understood *peirasmos* as the final trial brought on by Satan's attack; hence, it has given a personal interpretation of *poneros* ("the evil one"). Deliverance from evil is not within humanity's grasp; for this the power and grace of God are needed. Hence, we pray God for his active intervention on our behalf.

i. Doxology: "*For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen*" (addition to Mt 6:13)[94]

This doxology, which some late manuscripts added to Matthew, corresponds very well with the prayer of Israel. The first and profoundest response of the people of Israel to God's saving acts towards them is the praise of His "glory" (*doxa*). This tripartite doxology is based on 1 Chronicles 29:11: "Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, *the power*, *the glory*, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is *the kingdom*, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all" (1 Chron 29:11). It is highly probable that this text from Chronicles forms the basis of the doxological ending of Lord's Prayer[95] and was probably added later in order to provide a third part to the Lord's Prayer.[96] As is already mentioned earlier, the Jewish prayer, the "Eighteen Benedictions" shows the pattern of *praise*, *petition*, and *thanksgiving*. The Lord's Prayer is also made to have all these three parts. The first part offers praise to God by asking that his name be hallowed, his kingdom come, and his will be done. Then come petitions for human needs, and finally, the doxology, which again praises God. The Lord's Prayer, thus, reaches its climax in words of praise and adoration. "It teaches us to think of God as *Father* ('Our Father'), as *King* ('Thy kingdom come'), as *Governor* ('Thy will be done'), as *Provider* ('Give us... bread'), as *Pardoner* ('Forgive us our trespasses') as *Guide* ('Lead us...'), as *Deliverer* ('Deliver us from evil')."[97]

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[93] Davis and Allison, *Matthew*, 614-615.

[94] See Section 4, last paragraph.

[95] Alfons Deissler, "*The Spirit of the Lord's Prayer*," 16.

[96] Gordon J. Bahr, "*The Use of the Lord's Prayer in the Primitive Church*," in Petuchowski and Brocke, eds., *The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy*, 152-153.

[97] Coggan, *The Prayers of the New Testament*, 40.

8. Some Critical Reflections

Before concluding our study on the Lord's Prayer, it is useful to make some critical reflections on this prayer. This we do by examining the Lord's Prayer from a vertical as well as a horizontal perspective. From a vertical perspective the Lord's Prayer appears to be wholly theocentric, because from the very beginning of the prayer till its last petition, it speaks only about God the Father; but on close analysis, one could find that it is a Trinitarian prayer. As we pass from this vertical dimension of the prayer to its horizontal dimension, what is striking is the emphasis that the prayer gives to *koinonia* or community aspect. The vertical dimension is the source and paradigm of the horizontal and the latter derives its meaning and identity from the former. But before we enter into these reflections, let us see whether the Lord's Prayer is the prayer only of the Christians or of the whole humanity. Here we touch upon its universal character.

a. The universal character of Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer is generally understood as "the Christian prayer *par excellence*." Yet throughout the prayer it speaks only about the heavenly Father. Though the disciples are asked to pray for the coming of God's kingdom, the prayer as such does not point out that it has already become a present reality with the life and ministry of Christ. Nor does the Lord's Prayer even mention the coming of Jesus on earth. Thus, there is nothing in the Lord's Prayer that can show it to be a Christocentric prayer. But there are enough reasons for us to conclude that it is, indeed, a theocentric prayer. By formulating the Lord's Prayer wholly centred on the heavenly figure of "Father," Jesus has, so to say, put "an end to the false exclusiveness of the various religious traditions which focused their distinctiveness on the name by which they called upon God."[98] Anyone who sincerely seeks God can approach Him in the Lord's Prayer and for this there is no need for him to subscribe to any religious creed or dogma.[99]

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[98] Clements, *The Prayers of the Bible*, 243. Often we classify the followers of different religions on the basis of the different divine names, which they use when addressing God such as Yahweh, Allah, or Brahman etc. Jesus has avoided using any particular name for God and addressed Him simply as "Father" which may be acceptable to all believers in God. But here we have to acknowledge with Clements, *The Prayers of the Bible*, 247, that "the image of God as 'Father' inevitably lacks the sensitivity to those 'feminine' aspects of deity which the modern feminist movement has seen as of so great importance." The author continues, "during its history the Christian faith has, in other ways, given more place to the 'feminine' aspects of the

One of the prominent aspects of this prayer is the simplicity and intelligibility that is seen in the invocation of God as "Father." In a world, which associates all kinds of special powers and effects with the use of a great variety of divine names, the Lord's Prayer uses only a title, which displays a remarkable and inclusive simplicity.[100] The fact that Jesus taught his disciples to relate to God under the analogy of a human father highlights the essentially personal nature of the community he established. By addressing God as "Father" the character of divine-human relationship has been defined by the nature of human relationships. Here we must acknowledge that no one single analogy can possibly be expected to convey a full and completely balanced picture of God. Even the best and most valued analogy can only be a partial expression of the whole truth.[101] Still, the analogy of "Father" is the best single expression possible to be used of God, which can bring to our mind some essential characteristics of the Supreme Reality to which we can relate ourselves in a meaningful way.

b. The Trinitarian dimension of the Lord's Prayer

Prayer brings humans before God and it helps to establish a relationship between them. It is in prayer that we look at the very depth of our being and discover the most authentic and fundamental orientation of our existence. It is in prayer that we gain access to the world of the transcendent, which normally remains inaccessible to the majority of people. It is in prayer that we enter into an intimate and personal relationship with God. This relationship between God and humans is a dynamic one because it is made not by humans but by the Holy Spirit who is the divine subject in us praying with us and for us. The Holy Spirit works within us as an immanent dynamic power (see Lk 9:1; 24:49; Acts

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divine Creator. The Lord's Prayer is necessarily bound up to a certain extent with the first-century social world of Palestine Galilee."

[99] Swami Prabhavananda, *The Sermon on the Mount According to Vedanta*, New York: New American Library, 1963, 85.

[100] Clements, *The Prayers of the Bible*, 246. See also Boring, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 203, "*Abba*, Father" was first of all Jesus' word to express his own relation to God. He then included his disciples, and then all human beings in this relationship.

[101] Clements, *The Prayers of the Bible*, 247.

1:8) helping us to establish and deepen our relationship with God. This is what Paul tells us in Rom 8:26: "The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to prayer as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words."

If prayer is a relationship, we can relate to God in different ways: as creatures to their Creator, as the saved to their Saviour, as children to their Father. Of all these, the most sublime is the one of the children to their Father. This is what Jesus has taught his disciples to pray for as they relate themselves to God. It is true that our sonship is not a natural one but an adopted one, which we have received in and through Jesus Christ who is the natural Son of God. Hence, when we address God, "Our Father who art in heaven," we are relating to God as Father in and through his Son. It is the Spirit of his Son who is in us makes us conscious of our sonship and helps us cry, "*Abba*! Father!" This is what we see beautifully expressed in Gal 4:4-6, "When the time had fully come, *God* sent forth his *Son*, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the *Spirit* of his Son into our hearts, crying, '*Abba*! Father!'" Hence, for a Christian, how rich the expression, "*Our Father*," is and how it brings all the three divine Persons in our relationship with God.

This Trinitarian aspect of the Lord's Prayer is very well seen in the petitions that follow. The first petition, "hallowed be your name," could be seen as directed to God the Father. "Hallowed be your name," means, "may your name be sanctified." When God's name is sanctified among humans, it is also glorified" in the whole creation. Jesus has said that he has come in his "Father's name" (Jn 5:43) and that the works he does, he does them in his "Father's name" (Jn 10:25). In Jn 12:28 Jesus prays for its glorification, "Father, glorify your name" (Jn 12:28). When we pray this petition, we are praying with Jesus for the glorification of the name of the Father.

The second petition, "Your kingdom come," though directed to the Father, it is equally directed to the Son, because it is in and through the Son that the kingdom of God is to come, be realized and be established in all its perfection and glory. If the term, "kingdom of God," means "God's Rule" or "God's Reign," this rule or reign of God is to find its realization in humans who submit themselves to the rule or reign of Christ in their lives. In the eschatological times, the kingdom of God will be one with the kingdom of Christ (Rev 11:15; 12:10). When we pray "Your kingdom come" we are praying for the final days when Christ returns in all his glory and hands over the kingdom to God the Father, "Then comes the end, when he [Christ] delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power" (1 Cor 15:24).

The third petition, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," is, of course, directed to the Father insofar as the will is the will of the Father. But the carrying out of God's will, which is essentially establishing the kingdom of God on earth, is to be done by humans on earth. For this carrying out of God's will, the humans need the power of the Spirit which is given to them generously by Christ: "And he called the twelve together and gave them *power* and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal" (Lk 9:1-2). Again, we see the risen Lord promising his disciples the supreme gift of the Father, "And behold, I send the promise of the Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high" (Lk 24:49; see also Acts 1:8). In this way the first three "you-petitions" are related to all the three Persons of the Godhead either directly or indirectly. When we pray this prayer we are trying to establish a personal and intimate relationship with the triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

In the same way the last three "we-petitions" are also related to the three Persons of the Trinity. When we pray the first "we-petition": "Give us this day our daily bread," we think of *God the Father*, the Creator and Sustainer of all life (see Ps 104:14-15; Mt 6:25-33). When we pray the second "we-petition," namely, the prayer for the forgiveness of our sins, we think of *God the Son*, the Saviour of all humanity who redeemed us from our sins through his life, ministry, death and resurrection, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us" (Eph 1:7-8). When we pray the third "we-petition," the prayer for help not to fall into temptation and to preserve us in the eschatological hour of trial, we think of *God the Holy Spirit* who is our Helper and *Guide*: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will *guide* you into all the truth" (Jn 16:13). In this way these three petitions bring us face to face with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and, thus, take our whole life to the triune God.[102] Thus, the

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[102] Barclay, *The Lord's Prayer*, 21.

Lord's Prayer helps us to relate ourselves to all the three Persons of Godhead and in this sense Lord's Prayer could be seen as a Trinitarian prayer.

c. The community aspect of the Lord's Prayer

The community focus of the Lord's Prayer is very well seen in its use of the first person plural pronouns. The invocation, "*Our* Father, who art in heaven," at the beginning of the prayer already sets the stage for this communitarian aspect of it. Jesus wants the disciples to see the prayer as *their* prayer. Through the use of "our" in the invocation, the disciples are already placed into a vertical relationship with God and a horizontal relationship with one another. Addressing God as "*Our* Father" we establish a firm foundation for our interpersonal relationship that involves God, who is present in every person, and in every human relationship.[103]

It is Jesus who brought us a new understanding of the nature of God and his personal relation to humanity. In his experience of God as "Father" he brought God down to earth.[104] As we have already seen, when we address God, "*Our Father,*" it brings all the three divine Persons in our relationship with God. As we share in Jesus' experience of the Father, we enter into the dynamics of the Trinitarian experience.[105] In the Spirit we are united with Christ the Son and we become sons in the Son and we are able to say "*Abba*, Father" (Rom 8:14-16; Gal 4:4-6). This relationship or fellowship with God is so deep and personal that we experience God "in a communion of being," that is, "we are persons within the Person, a communion of persons in love."[106] The mystery of the Holy Trinity reveals that *Being* is essentially a *koinōnia* of love; it is communion, a reciprocal call to be; it is "being-together" and "being-with"; its essence is a "giving" and "receiving."[107] Within the Trinity *koinōnia* points to the community of being and love and outside the Trinity it points to the communication of this love to us humans through grace. Love (*agapē*) is the inner principle of this *koinōnia.*[108]

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[103] Boff, *The Lord's Prayer*, 90.

[104] Bede Griffiths, *A New Vision of Reality: Western Science, Eastern Mysticism and Christian Faith*, ed. Felicity Edwards, Indian edition, New Delhi: Indus, an imprint of Harper Collins Publishers India, 1992, 218.

[105] Griffiths, *A New Vision of Reality*, 223.

[106] Griffiths, *A New Vision of Reality*, 225. Bede Griffiths, *The New Creation in Christ: Christian Meditation and Community*, ed. Robert Kiely and Laurene Freeman, London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1992, 50, writes: "In the doctrine of the Trinity the ultimate Reality is seen as Being in relationship or Being in love. The ultimate Reality is neither a solitary person nor an impersonal Absolute. It is a communion of persons in love."

It is the communion of being, this "fellowship" (*koinōnia*) with the Father and with the Son that forms the basis of our fellowship with our brethren (1 Jn 1:3). "The interpersonal relationships within the Trinity are the model and exemplar of all interpersonal relationships on earth and ultimately also of all interrelationships in the whole creation."[109] The experience of a Christian is always a community experience.[110] This is what we find realized in the early Christian community where the believers were "of one heart and soul" (Acts 4:32) and they "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship (*koinōnia*), to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). The descent of the Holy Spirit formed them into a "*community*" of believers who "had everything in *common* (*koina*)" (Acts 4:32), even at the economic level. "Once there is the *koinōnia*, the common life in Christ, there is the beginning of community."[111] The *koinōnia*, the "being-together," of Christians is modelled on the "being-together" in the Trinitarian mystery of the Father and the Son in the Spirit.[112] God is not one Person, but a community of three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father is present to the Son and the Son to the Father. This mutual presence of Father and Son is the model and basis of our being present to each other within the human community. When we pray "Our Father" we proclaim that we all belong to this one human community and are present to each other. The very essence of the three Divine Persons in the Godhead consists in relating to each other in perfect communion, a communion that consists in total mutual giving and receiving, in knowing and being known, and in loving and being loved. It is this Trinitarian communion that we have to manifest in our life through our words and actions when we pray "Our Father." We will, thus, begin to pray "Our Father" when we begin to realize God's presence in the depth of our being and the being of our fellow brethren.

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[107] Abhishiktanananda, *Saccidānanda*, 135.

[108] Abhishiktanananda, *Saccidānanda*, 146, note 1. In Jn 17:21-23 we find a twofold inter-communion: the *koinōnia* between the Father and the Son and the *koinōnia* among the Divine Persons and the disciples.

[109] Griffiths, *A New Vision of Reality*, 254.

[110] Griffiths, *A New Vision of Reality*, 221, tells: "The Hindu experience is essentially individual and has no positive relationship to the community whereas the Christian experience, although certainly personal and individual, is always, implicitly or explicitly, a community experience."

[111] Griffiths, *The New Creation in Christ*, 89.

[112] Abhishiktananda, *Prayer*, 14, note 2.

9. Conclusion

The Lord's Prayer is one of the most central and valued treasures of the Christian community. It presents the message of Christ in a nutshell. It revolves around the great concerns of God, but in such a way that from the outset God is seen as concerned with humans. It orientates all our life to God and to our fellow humans. It is a prayer that unites us. In calling upon God as Father we are drawn into a familial relationship to one another. The prayer introduces us in the understanding of salvation, which cannot be realized without our co-operation. We cannot pray "your kingdom come" unless we co-operate in its realization. We cannot pray, "forgive our debts," unless we forgive first our brethren. Only when we are in right relationship with God and with our neighbour, we could pray the Lord's Prayer in an authentic and meaningful way. In this way the Lord's Prayer becomes *faith in action* and ceases to be a duty to be performed. "Kingdom" and "forgiveness" are the two key terms used in the Lord's Prayer and they direct our attention to the basic Christian experience – the experience of God reigning in our hearts and the experience of God's forgiving love (see Rom 5:8; 1 Jn 4:10). The Lord's Prayer is, thus, "centred wholly on the Kingdom" and it is wholly a "prayer for the Kingdom" and "like the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, all our (other) petitions are ultimately paraphrases of the one great petition: 'May your kingdom come.'"[113] "Kingdom of God," as the perfect blossoming of the communion of all, should be the centre of all our aspirations and searches: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Mt 6:33). The Lord's Prayer is, thus, not only a call to pray, but also a call to express our faith, to express our deepest convictions and a call to live our Christian life meaningfully and dynamically orientating it to the inner life of the triune God and centring it on the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of humanity.

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[113] Soares-Prabhu, "*Speaking to Abba*," 47, 49.

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PRAYER IN HINDU AND BUDDHIST RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

Antony Mookenthottam♦

1. Introduction

The term *Prayer* is used with a wide variety of meanings. The prototype of all prayers is the free, spontaneous petitionary prayer of the natural man.[1] So the most common understanding of prayer is that of a request addressed to a personal deity. Though it appears to be simple, prayer, even as a request has several implications. A request indirectly acknowledges dependence and the awareness that the person requested is able to and be persuaded to grant the favour.[2]

Prayer is also an expression of religious experience.[3] Insight, life-changing illumination, gift of love that transforms from within, and disclosures of reality to certain persons are also designated by the term prayer.[4] Inter-religious prayer becomes more complex in the context of religious traditions like Buddhism and Jainism, which do not believe in a personal God but accepts prayer. So we need a more common and broader understanding of prayer which is open-ended in an inter-religious context. It seems to me that a common open-ended definition is possible: prayer is an expression of needs, the deepest sentiments, inner-most longings,

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[1] Friedrich Heiler, *Prayer: A Study in the History and Psychology of Religion*, trans. & ed. Samuel Mc Comb, London: Oxford University Press, 1937, 1.

[2] Vincent Brümmer, *What Are We Doing When We Pray? A Philosophical Inquiry*, London: SCM Press, 1984, 29.

[3] Heiler, *Prayer*, xvii.

[4] Denis Lardner Carmody and John July Carmody, *Prayer in World Religions*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990, 2-3.

aspirations, search for reality and experience of the human person.[5] With this understanding, it is possible to examine the dynamics of prayer in various religious traditions no matter whether they believe in God or not.

2. Prayer in Hindu Religious Tradition

There are several terms used to express prayer from Vedic times. A short survey of these terms shall be undertaken to unveil the specific nature of prayer in Hinduism.

a. *Brahman*

The original word for prayer used in the *Rgveda* was Brahman. This term seems to have been derived from the root *bṛh* meaning to grow or to burst forth; "brahman as prayer is what manifests itself in audible speech."[6] It came to mean vedic hymns addressed to the deities and the inherent power of hymns. Finally, it came to mean the absolute, the transcendent Reality which pervades the whole universe, the ground of being.[7] This change of meaning made it necessary to look for other terms.

b. *Mantra*

The term *mantra* is derived from the root *man* meaning to think. It means "instrument of thought, speech, sacred text, a prayer or song of praise, a sacred formula addressed to any deity, a mystic verse or mystical formula. It means also incantation, charm.[8] It refers also to a specific secret word, phrase or sacred text communicated to a disciple by the Guru which is to be constantly repeated to gain realization.[9] There is another word for prayer which also implies repetition.

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[5] Such a definition is necessary since Hinduism accepts God while Buddhism does not. Theistic religious traditions can easily add to the definition something relevant for them like "about a personal Supreme God."

[6] M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994, 54.

[7] For the development of the term Brahman, see Antony Mookenthottam, *Towards a Theology in the Indian Context*, Bangalore: ATC, 1980, 4-6.

[8] Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s.v. "*Mantra*."

[9] For a detailed study of *mantra*, see *Understanding Mantras*, ed., Harvey P. Alper, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991.

c. *Japa*

The word *japa* is derived from the root *jap*, meaning to utter in a low voice, to whisper, to mutter, to pray to anyone. *Japa* means muttering prayers, whispering.[10] It refers also to the constant repetition of the name of a deity. There is yet another word not so commonly used.

d. *Prārthana*

This term is derived from *prārth* meaning to wish or long for, to ask a person. *Prārthana* expresses a wish, desire, entreaty or petition.

The etymological sense of the word *brahman*, burst forth, seems to indicate praises of the Gods and desires and longings for riches and prosperity bursting forth from the human heart. This expresses well the content and dispositions of a vast number of ṛgvedic hymns. When the word *brahman* assumed an entirely different meaning in the course of time, terms like *mantra* meaning songs of praise, aspirations with mystic connotations, *japa* indicating recital and *prārthana* expressing petitions began to be used for prayer.

We have already defined prayer as the expression of human needs, longings and so forth. Now we shall follow prayer in Hindu religious tradition from the very ordinary yearnings to the most sublime.

e. Prayer as an expression of human needs

The Vedic people prayed for riches, wealth, and prosperity:

> Agni, beheld by us in nearest neighbourhood, accordant with the Gods, brings us, with gracious love, great riches with thy gracious love (RV 1.127.11).[11]

Human needs are of various kinds: material, physical, psychological and spiritual. The following prayer expresses physical and psychological needs:

> Thou art energy, give me energy;
> thou are manliness, give me manliness;

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[10] Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*.

[11] Translations from *The Hymns of the Ṛgveda*, trans. Ralph T. H. Griffith, ed. J. L. Shastri, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986, 88. There are numerous hymns which express human needs. Here the awareness of "gracious love" is worth noting. Prayer is not mere fulfilment of needs. But relationship is implied.

> thou art strength, give me strength;
> thou art vigour, give me vigour;
> thou art wrath, give me wrath;
> thou art conquering power, give me conquering power.[12]

In the *Ṛgveda*, it is rarely that requests alone are made. Often they are accompanied by praise and friendship.

f. Prayer as praise

Praise bursts forth from the admiration of gods, of their benevolence and goodness:

> O Agni, King and Lord of wealth and treasures, in thee is my delight and sacrifices…
>
> Agni, Eternal Father, offering bearer, fair to behold, far-reaching, far-refulgent… (RV 5.4.1-2).[13]

Praise and admiration in prayer can be born of love and vice-versa. The words used for love are revelatory.

g. Prayer as friendship

The terms *pria* – dear, beloved, *sakha* – companion, and *sakhya* – friendship are[14] used in the *Ṛgveda* to express the intimate relationship and communication between gods and the vedic people. There is familiarity and deep respect:

> Dear is the pious, the devout; to Indra; dear is the zealous, dear the Soma-bringer – *priya sukṛt, priya indre manyuh, priya supravih priya asya sami* (RV 4.25.5)[15]

The gods are friends, companions – *Sakha*:

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[12] The text of the prayer is from *Yajuveda* verses 19.9. Translation from *Hymns from the Vedas*, original text and trans. Abinash Chandra Bose, London: Asia Publishing House, 1966, 107.

[13] Griffith, *The Hymns*, 239; see also RV 4.26.1ff. The vast majority of the hymns of the *Ṛgveda* contain praise, admiration.

[14] For an analysis of the terms, see Antony Mookenthottam, *An Introduction to Indian Spirituality*, IV: "The Highest Mystery," in *Indian Journal of Spirituality*, 10,4 (December 1997), 409-418.

[15] Griffith, *The Hymns*, 218. For the Sanskrit text see, *Ṛgvedam Bhaṣabhaṣyam*, Sanskrit text and trans. into Malayalam, O. M. C. Narayanan Namboodiripad, Vol. 1-8, Kottayam: D.C. Books, 1995.

Do thou, O Friend, turn hither him who is our friend...(RV 4.1.3)

Be thou, O Agni, nearest us with succour; our closest friend... (RV 4.1.5).[16]

Any rupture in this relationship was a sin. It called for reconciliation.

h. Prayer for forgiveness

Panikkar writes on sin and forgiveness: Varuṇa scrutinizes Men's deeds, good and bad alike. His piercing eye sees everything, and he, the all-powerful ruler of the universe who combines justice and mercy, knows how to punish the recalcitrant and forgive the penitent:

If your true friend has sinned against you, O Varuṇa,
he yet remains your friend, the one you love.
Not as sinners, O living One,
may we come before you! Grant protection to him
who hymns you, as to a sage![17]

It is not only from Varuṇa but also from other gods like Agni, Soma, Vedic people sought forgiveness.[18]

From these ways of relating themselves to the gods, the sages, tuned to different forms of prayer and experience. At times they felt inspired by what they saw in the universe. Sometimes, they received deeper insight – *dhi*, into reality. More and more, they became aware of the mystery which surrounded them and in which they lived. This made them seek enlightenment, insight – *dhi*, into reality.

This is at the origin of the most famous *mantra* of the *Ṛgveda*, *Gāyatrī*. The Sanskrit text runs as follows:

Tat savitur vareṇyam
bhargo devasya dhīmahi
Dhīyo yo nàh pracodayāt
(RV 3.62.10)
We meditate upon the glorious splendour
of the vivifier divine

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[16] Griffith, *The Hymns*, 199.

[17] Raimundo Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience*: *Mantramañjari*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979, 485-486.

[18] Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience*, 485-489.

May he himself illumine our minds![19]

The text as it is recited today begins with

Om, bhur bhuvah svah
tat savitur…(as above).

Om is the monosyllabic symbol of the Absolute, the Supreme, the Divine. *Bhur bhuvah svah* referring to earth, heaven and ether is taken from the *Yajurveda.*[20]

The *Gāyatrī*, also called *Sāvitrī*, is the most known of all the prayers of the Saṁhitās:

> It is addressed to the divine life-giver as supreme God, symbolized in Savitṛ, the Sun. for this reason this prayer is also called *Sāvitrī*. It is recited daily at sunrise and at sunset, usually at the moment of the ritual bath. This *mantra* derives its name from the meter in which it is written, the *Gāyatrī* being a Vedic poetic meter of twenty-four syllables, of which the author, according to tradition, was the sage Viśvamitra.[21]

In this hymn, *Savitṛ* does not refer to any concrete, material aspect of the sun. *Savitṛ* is used symbolically and the hymn is addressed to the divine splendour of the Supreme Divinity. Hence, any believer may pray the hymn. Some use it as a *mantra.*[22]

i. Prayer as *mantra*

Common people consider *mantra* as a charm with hidden powers to do good or especially harm. This is not correct. Panikkar explains the true meaning of the term *mantra*: "*Mantras* are not magical formulas, nor are they merely logical sequences; they connect, in a very special way, the objective and subjective aspects of reality.

The *mantra* is a prayer that is very personal. Often it is given by a guru. It is constantly repeated to deepen awareness. It brings about a union of the mind with the word. Panikkar affirms that living words have meaning and "a power that transcends the purely mental plane." The repetition is meant to grasp the meaning, the energy and vibrations of the word. The essentials for an authentic *mantra* are "faith, understanding, and physical utterance as well as physical continuity"[23] Such an understanding of the *mantra* enables us to penetrate the meaning of *Gāyatrī*.

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[19] Text and translation, Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience*, 38.

[20] See Ref. No. 3 in A. C. Bose, *Hymns from the Vedas*, 67.

[21] Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience*, 38-39.

[22] Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience*, 39.

j. The symbolic meaning of *Gāyatrī*

We shall take this prayer phrase-by-phrase to have a better understanding of it.

i) "*We meditate on the glorious splendour*":

This part of the prayer refers to the brilliance of the uncreated light unceasingly emanating from the divinity beyond all descriptions. We can only contemplate it.

ii) "*Of the vivifier divine*":

Just as the light of the sun vivifies and energizes the whole creation so too the uncreated divine light vivifies, inspires, illumines, strengthens and penetrates the whole creation with its brilliance.

iii) "*May he himself illumine our minds*":

May the glorious splendour and brilliance of the uncreated divine light may be communicated to us. May it illumine our minds and hearts, chasing away darkness, ignorance and sin. May we be transformed into transparent mediums of this light.[24]

It seems to me that another famous Upaniṣadic prayer draws inspiration from *Gāyatrī*:

asato mā sat gamaya
tamaso mā jyotir gamaya
mṛtyor mā amṛtam gamaya
From the unreal lead me to the real!
From darkness lead me to the light!
From death lead me to immortality! (BU 1.3.28)[25]

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[23] Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience*, 39: we may recall here that similar principles are involved in Jesus Prayer, too.

[24] See also Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience*, 43.

[25] Sanskrit text from *The Principal Upaniṣads*, ed. & trans. S. Radhakrishnan, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968. 162. Translation from *Hindu Scriptures*, trans. & ed. R. C. Zaehner, London: Dent, 1972, 34.

The *Gāyatrī* and the prayer quoted above – *asato mā* – indicate another form of prayer, namely, meditation. The *Nāsadīya sūkta* affirms that the sages searching within their hearts can discover what even the gods may not know (RV 10.129.4). This searching within the heart is certainly meditation which leads to realisation, contemplation.

k. Meditation

The word meditation is derived from *dhyai*, *dhyāyati* meaning to think of, imagine, contemplate, meditate. It's noun form *dhyāna* means meditation, thought, reflection especially profound and abstract religious meditation.[26] Another term which express meditation is *upāsate* and *upāsana*. The Word is derived from *upa* 'toward' and *ās* 'to sit'. *Upās*, *Upāsate* means to sit by the side of, to approach respectfully, honour, worship. *Upa* shows direction, and to sit toward is static rather than active. The purpose of *upāsate* is to realize that "Truly I am this whole universe…Truly the Self is this whole universe" (CU 7.25.1-2). *Upāsate* seems to mean worshipful or respectful contemplation to realize in one-self that toward which one is sitting, that on which attention is concentrated.

Upāsate is a process of progressive realization. Sanatkumāra repeatedly uses the verb *upāsate* from CU 7.1.4 to 7.14.1 till he leads Nārada to the meditation on life, *prāṇa*, the realization of *brahman* as *prāṇa* or conscious self. From the conscious self, he passes on to *satyam*, truth. Once Sanatkumāra begins his instruction on *satyam*, there is no mention of *upāsate* but *satyam tva eva vijiñāsitavyam iti*; *satyam bhagavah vijijñāsa iti* (CU 7.16.1), meaning "then [you] should really want to understand the truth… Sir, I do want to understand the truth." The verb *upāsate* used so far is left out showing that a change has already taken place. *Vijijñāsa*, understanding, takes the place of *upāsate*.

Finally, Nārada is led to the Infinite. The mode understanding ceases, rather is sublimated:

> *nānyat paśyati, nānyac śṛṇoti,*
> *nānyad vijñānati sa bhūmā –*

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[26] Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit–English Dictionary*, s.v. "*Dhyana*."

"Where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, knows nothing else, that is the Infinite" (CU 7.24.1).[27]

The *Maitri* Upaniṣad gives a method of meditation which it calls yoga. In it, yoga technique and valuable elements of traditional meditation are integrated.

I. The *maitri* method

The *Maitri Upaniṣad* follows a practical method of meditation (MaiU 6.18). The principal components are:

i. Breath Control (*prāṇāyāmah*).
ii. Withdrawal of the senses (*pratyāhāra*): This withdrawal of the senses from external objects is as in a dream (MaiU 6.25).
iii. Meditation (*dhyāna*), concentration: The mind is withdrawn from the external. The one who meditates stands mentally still forming no conceptions (MaiU 6.19).
iv. Concentration (*dhāraṇa*) pure, simple and deeper concentration of the mind. Even the function of the mind is completely stopped (MaiU 6.20).
v. Analytic discrimination (*tarka*): Discerning the changeless, eternal from the changing, the transient, the contingent.
vi. Ecstasy (*samādhi*): *Samādhi* is experienced and expressed in many ways as the experience of oneness with *brahman*, of its omnipresence and even of identity.[28]

We are already in mysticism with *samādhi*[29] which is beyond our scope of analysis, though it comes under prayer in a very large sense. Now we shall pass on to prayer in Buddhism.

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[27] See Antony Mookenthottam, "Meditation in The Hindu Scriptures," in *Indian Journal of Spirituality* 5,2 (June 1992), 185-186.

[28] Mookenthottam, "Meditation in The Hindu Scriptures," 192.

[29] For more details on various forms of prayer and meditation, see Francis Vineeth, "Theology of Adiśabda and Om" in *Indian Christian Spirituality*, ed. D. S. Amalorpavadass, Bangalore: NBCLC, 1982, 125-131; T. M. Manickam, T*heological Schools of the Acharyas and the Spirituality of Schools of Iśvaranubhava /Atmanubhava*, in *Indian Christian Spirituality*, 142-150; T. M. Manickam, *Yoga: A Sādhana for Hamony of Life*, in *Indian Christian Spirituality*, 178-182.

3. Prayer in Buddhism

The meaning of the word 'Prayer' in Buddhism is not the same as in theistic religions as mentioned earlier. Buddhism does not believe in God. It spread all over Asia, took various forms adapted to the culture and local traditions of the people. It has also made changes in doctrine and practice. So, it is rather difficult to describe what is prayer in Buddhism. Basing on the Inter-religious definition of prayer given earlier, we may try to understand Buddhist prayer.

a. Prayer as self-expression

The expression of human aspirations, struggles and fulfilment is a form of Buddhist prayer:

> 'Upward from sole of foot, O mother dear,
> Downward from crown of hair this body see.
> Is't not impure, the evil-smelling thing?'
> This have I pondered, meditating still,
> Till every throb of lust is rooted out.
> Expunged is all the fever of desire.
> Cool am I now and calm – *Nibbana*'s peace.[30]

This prayer expresses meditation on the disgusting aspects of the body to create an aversion for lust, to root it out and win everlasting calm – *Nibbana*'s peace.

Prayer is also taking refuge in Buddha, the order and the Rule and the realization of Arhantship. Ubbiri lost her daughter. She was wailing. After receiving instruction from Buddha, she describes her experience:

> Lo! From my heart the hidden shaft is gone!
> The shaft that nestled there hath he removed.
> And that consuming grief for my dead child
> Which poisoned all the life of me is dead.
> To-day my heart is healed, my yearning stayed,
> And all within is purity and peace.
> Lo! I for refuge to the Buddha go –
> The only wise – the Order and the Norm.[31]

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[30] *Sacred Writings of the Buddhists, Psalms of the Sisters*, ed. David R., vol. 16(1), New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1987, 30.

[31] *Sacred Writings of the Buddhists*, 39-40.

The above text expresses to some extent at least what Anasake wrote about Buddhist prayer:

> … When prayer is understood in a broader way, there is the Buddhist prayer as an expression of earnest faith, determined intention as a means of self-perfection in Buddhist ideals. Moreover, the Buddhist religion developed, after the death of its founder, in the direction of adoring him not only as a perfect personality but as an embodiment of universal truth, i.e., in the conception of the *dharmakāyā*.[32]

Those who sought liberation from suffering turn to Buddha as their refuge. Buddha instructs them. This relationship between Buddha and the seeker is one of Guru and the disciple. It is in this sense that is to be understood. It is a form of prayer, an expression of devotion to the Guru as well as exultation in the law:

> Then the venerable Sāriptura, pleased, glad, charmed, cheerful, thrilling with delight and joy, stretched his joined hands towards the Lord, and, looking up to the Lord with a steady gaze, addressed him in this strain: I am astonished, amazed, O Lord! I am in ecstasy to hear such a call from the Lord. For when, before I had heard of this law from the Lord, I saw other Bodhisattvas, and heard that the Bodhisattvas would in future get the name of Buddhas, I felt extremely sorry, extremely vexed to be deprived from so grand a sight as the Tathāgata-knowledge. And whenever, O Lord, for my daily recreation I was visiting the caves of rocks or mountains, wood thickets, lovely gardens, rivers, and roots of trees, I always was occupied with the same and ever-recurring thought: 'Whereas the entrance into the fixed points of the law is nominally equal, we have been dismissed by the Lord with the inferior vehicle.' Instantly, however, O Lord, I felt that it was our own fault, not the Lord's… (But) today, O Lord, I have reached complete extinction; today, O Lord, I have become calm; today, O Lord, I am wholly come to rest; today, O Lord, I have reached Arhatship; today, O Lord, I am the Lord's eldest son, born from his law, sprung into existence by the

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[32] *The Buddhist Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, ed. Suboth Kapoor, vol. 4, s.v. "Prayer (Buddhist)" by M. Anasake.

> law, made by the law, inheriting from the law, accomplished by the law.[33]

Buddhists devotion to the law is at the source of the harmony of prayer, ethical life and practice of virtues in Buddhism.[34]

b. The middle path

The middle path is a set of ethical principles. It consists of right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.[35] The last two play a very significant role in attaining calm, peace and enlightenment.

c. Buddhist meditation

The ethical principles of the eightfold middle path are divided into three main categories: *śīla* (conduct), *jñāna* (knowledge) and *dhyāna* (meditation). Of these, two deserve special attention:

> They are *samāsati* (right mindfulness) and *sammāsamādhi* (deep meditation). *Samāsati* is a constant awareness of what occurs in oneself, and through this awareness one is purified. It produces indifference to the world. *Sammāsamādhi* is the deep and most intense stage of meditation following the purification of the mind, culminating in total indifference. Buddha strongly recommended meditation; through meditation things are known as they really are, and the extinction of suffering is achieved.[36]

Buddhist meditation is very analytic. The following stages illustrate it:

i. Mindfulness (*sati*), i.e., to be aware and mindful in all activities and movements both physical and mental.

ii. Investigation and research into the various problems of doctrine (*dhammavicaya*). Included here are all our religious, ethical and philosophical studies, reading, researches, discussions, conversation, even attending lectures relating to such doctrinal subjects.[37]

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[33] *The Saddharma–Pundarika or the Lotus of the True Law*, trans. H. Kern, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980, 60-61.

[34] In this aspect, there is certainly similarity to Christianity which also considers prayer and meditation without a corresponding moral life as hypocrisy.

[35] Antony Mookenthottam, *Towards a Theology in the Indian Context*, Bangalore: ATC, 1980, 92-93.

[36] Mookenthottam, *Towards a Theology in the Indian Context*, 97-98.

There are four states on which meditation is specially recommended. These four sublime states are:

> (*Brahma-vihāra*): (1) extending unlimited, universal love and good-will (*metta*) to all living beings without any kind of discrimination, 'Just as a mother loves her only child'; (2) compassion (*karuṇa*) for all living beings who are suffering, in trouble and affliction; (3) sympathetic joy (*mudita*) in others' success, welfare and happiness: and (4) equanimity (*uppekkha*) in all vicissitudes of life.[38]

In this case, it is more contemplation than meditation.

4. Conclusion

Prayer is understood differently in different religious traditions. All the same, prayer understood as the expression of the deepest human aspirations, search for reality and experience is common to all religions.

There are various forms of prayer, like hymns in praise of gods and requests for benefits in Vedic tradition. *Ṛgveda* is marked by prayers which express deep friendship with gods, a sense of sin and seeking forgiveness from the gods. As the human heart longs for touch with and experience of reality, prayers take the form of seeking enlightenment and the Real. This leads to meditation. The Upaniṣads give various forms of meditation which, finally, leads to profound experience of God or the ultimate Reality.

Buddhism, though it does not believe in God, longs for liberation from suffering and the calm and peace of *Nibbana*. What is striking in Buddhist prayer is the harmony of prayer, meditation and moral life and concern for universal love, harmony and compassion. An essential dimension of prayer is concern for the other.

Universal love, harmony and compassion most relevant today are common to Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity. May I, therefore, conclude with a prayer of Hindu ancient sages that reiterate the yearning for the realization of unity at every level of being:

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[37] Walpola Rahula Thera, *The Setting of Mindfulness in Vipāsana: A Universal Buddhist Meditation Technique,* Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1999, 48.

[38] Thera, *The Setting of Mindfulness in Vipāsana*, 49.

May we meet together, speak together
May our minds be of one accord…
Let our aims be common,
and our hearts be one accord,
and all of us be of one mind,
so may we live well-together (RV 10.91.2,4).

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PRAYERS OF JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN AS PARADIGMS

Antony Edanad[◆]

1. Introduction

In traditional Christian understanding prayer[1] is seen as "speaking to God" or as "raising of the soul to God." In fact, prayer is at the same time *both* conversation with God *and* conscious elevation of one's whole being to God. There cannot be any conversation with God without the awareness of God's ineffable reality and presence, and there cannot be any raising of one's whole self to God without some kind of communication with God, verbal or non-verbal. Moreover, speaking to God involves listening to God and paying attention to his presence. Prayer has also a necessary communal dimension. Even in the case of personal prayer the praying individual stands in communion and solidarity with others. Prayer is and should be rooted in faith in God as one who is concerned about the humans and who makes himself accessible to them relating himself to them and intervening in their favour. The prayers of the Israelites found in the Bible are characterised by the recollection of the past deeds of God in their favour, certainty about his power and intention to intervene at present, and confidence and trust that he will accomplish his plan in the future.

Prayers of Jesus presented in the Gospel of John reflect the above-mentioned features and they are to be seen in the light of the Johannine theology. For obvious reasons based on the dynamics of the formation of the Gospels they cannot be taken as records of the exact words of Jesus. They are rather part of the Gospel *kerygma* showing the nature of his

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[1] The English word 'prayer', which is derived from the Latin *precari*, basically means a petition or request. However, in the religious use it has a wider sense of any communication of the humans with God.

relationship with God and with others, and expressing his soteriological identity.

In the Gospel of John we find two observations made by others about the efficacy of Jesus' prayer because of his personal status before God (Jn 9:31; 11:22), a formula indicating the prayerful gesture of Jesus ("give thanks") on the occasion of the miraculous feeding of a large number of people (Jn 6:11), and a promise made by him that he would effectively ask God, his Father, to give another Paraclete (the Spirit) to the disciples after his departure from them (Jn 14:16). Besides these oblique references to his prayers, in the Gospel there are two short prayers (Jn 11:41-42; 12:27-28) and a long one (Jn 17:1-26), which deserve special attention.

2. John 11:41-42

The context of Jn 11:41-42 is the last of the seven signs[2] worked by Jesus revealing his identity and the nature of his saving mission, namely, the raising of Lazarus whom he loves (11:3, 11). Lazarus is a representative of all those who believe in Jesus, who are his own (10:14), whom he loves (13:1; 15:9), and for whom he lays down his life (10:15) in order that they may have life in abundance (10:10). Jesus is the resurrection and the life so that those who believe in him, even if they die, will live (11:25). Raising of Lazarus from death to life is the sign of this truth and illustrates what Jesus has stated at 5:25, "Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." The physical life that he gives is symbolic of the divine and eternal life, and it is the sign of the resurrection that those who believe in him are to experience. In preparation for the working of this sign, looking upward Jesus says: "Father, I thank you because you heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this on account of the crowd standing around, that they may believe that you sent me" (11:41-42).

Since these words of Jesus are in the form of a statement rather than a petition, one may wonder whether they are actually a prayer as such. However, looking upward, up to heaven, is a gesture expressing prayerful attitude[3] and the direct address of God as "Father," a translation of Aramaic '*abbâ*', which in the Gospels is Jesus' characteristic manner of addressing God in prayer,[4] highlights the conversational aspect of prayer, besides his intimacy and special filial relationship with God. In anticipation of what is going to happen with the power he has from God, his Father, by virtue of his union with God, and with supreme confidence Jesus gives thanks to God for having already heard and granted his (implied) desire to give life to Lazarus. Thereby he indicates that it is the Father who is working through him and his will is not different from the Father's.[5] His confidence in the Father is rooted in the consciousness of his intimate relationship with him[6] as the Son who always does the will of the Father performing the saving task entrusted to him.[7] Jesus expresses aloud his confidence in the Father, who always hears him and who is, therefore, going to work through him, as it is clearly indicated, for the sake of others so that they may believe in him and in the Father as the one who sent him. This public prayer of Jesus is a form of proclamation shedding light on what he subsequently does: the raising of Lazarus. The consequence of this prayer, that is raising of Lazarus from death, is linked to the death of Jesus: because of this his opponents decide, ironically, .to deprive him, the life-giver, of his own life.[8] His death marks his "hour," the hour of his glorification culminating in his resurrection.[9] The raising of Lazarus itself is stated as to result in the glorification of Jesus (11:4). Thus, this prayer of Jesus implies his desire to complete his saving mission through his glorification by death and resurrection.

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[2] The seven signs of Jesus are narrated at Jn 2:1-11; 4:46-54; 5:1-18; 6:1-15; 6:16-21; 9:1-41; and 11:1-44.

3. John 12:27-28

At Jn 12:23 Jesus has announced the arrival of the hour for the glorification of the Son of Man that he is. In the same context he says: "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say – 'Father, save me from this hour'?[10] No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name" (12:27-28).

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[3] See Mk 6:41 and the parallel Jn 17:1.

[4] See Jn 12:27; 17:1, 4, 21, 24; also Lk 11:2; Mk 14:36.

[5] Jesus expresses his close dependence on God and the unity of their purpose at Jn 5:19-21, 30, 36; 14:10-11.

[6] Jn 10:38; 14:10-11, 20; 17:21, 23.

[7] Jn 6:38; 9:4; 17:4.

[8] Jn 11:45-53; also 11:14-16.

[9] See Jn 12:23-24, 27-28; 13:1, 31-33.

As the hour of his glorification through death and resurrection has arrived, the Johannine Jesus is fearful of the dark side of this hour, that is, the confrontation with Satan, the prince of this world (12:31), which is to result in his suffering and death. His natural tendency is to ask the Father to save him from this ordeal. However, he is conscious of the will of the Father and the nature of his mission. He is also confident that he can go through this frightening trial and complete his mission with the power of the Father, and with courage and in obedience to the divine plan he prays, "Father, glorify your name."

God's "glory" in the Bible (in Hebrew *kābôd*) means the mighty presence of God that can be experienced in some visible form. To glorify the divine name, therefore, means not only to exalt it but also to make the divine reality signified by the name experienceable. The name of the Father signifies his intimate relationship with Jesus as his unique Son. Consequently, the prayer that Jesus makes, addressing God directly as "Father," is a prayer for concrete manifestation of the unique relationship between God and himself as the Father and the Son. In the Gospel the ultimate revelation of Jesus is to take place when he is "lifted up" by crucifixion and resurrection; then his divine identity as "I am" is to become manifest (8:28). "I am" used absolutely, that is, without any complement, stands as the divine self-designation of Jesus[11] and this may be regarded as the divine name that the Father has given him (17:11, 12). The prayer that Jesus at the arrival of his "hour" makes to the Father to "glorify" his name is at the same time a prayer to "glorify" himself, namely, that the Father, according to his plan (10:17-18), through the death and resurrection of Jesus may in concrete form reveal the nature of the relationship between them and the real identity of Jesus so that those who accept him in faith may have salvation.[12] This prayer is, therefore, a prayer to accomplish the will of the Father and it is equivalent to "hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done" (Mt 6:9-10).

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[10] Another possible translation of this passage is: "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say? Father, save me from this hour..."

[11] In John there are six instances of this: 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5. This can be understood against the background of the revelation of divine name reported at Ex 3:14.

[12] See 8:28 with, especially, 3:16-17; 5:24; 6:40; and 11:25.

The prayer of Jesus receives an immediate response in the form of an audible heavenly voice, presumably the voice of the Father: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again" (12:28). The Father has glorified his name through the ministry of Jesus (2:11; 11:4) and he is surely going to bring to completion this glorification through the death and resurrection of Jesus, which is the culmination of that ministry; and the ultimate glorification of the divine name will be done through the glorified Jesus who will draw all people to himself (12:32). In the Gospel this is the only instance of the Father audibly responding to the prayer of Jesus, and it is stated that this response has come for the benefit of others and that Jesus himself did not need such a reassurance (12:30), as at 11:42 the prayer itself was meant to lead the listeners to believing that the Father has sent him.

4. John 17:1-26

After his farewell discourse to the disciples (13:31-16:33) the Johannine Jesus makes this prayer concluding the process of leave-taking in preparation for his death and departure to the Father. By far this is the longest and the most profound of the prayers of Jesus found in the Bible. It is an intimate conversation with his Father in the form of a monologue made in the presence of his disciples and intended for their information and benefit. The presence of the silent and invisible listener of this prayer is constantly made alive by invoking him frequently with supreme confidence as "Father" (17:1, 4, 21, 24), "Holy Father" (17:11) and "Righteous Father" (17:25). Jesus establishes "eye-contact" with him by looking up to heaven as he begins to make this prayer (17:1). In this prayer many of the themes of the discourse as well as of other discourses in the Gospel are recalled.

In general, the prayer has three parts: (i) Jesus, addressing "Father," prays for glory: he prays for his own glorification indicating that he has glorified the Father by accomplishing the task of making him known (17:1-8); (ii) invoking "Holy Father," he prays for those whom the Father has given him: describing the precarious situation of the disciples, he requests the Father to guard them and to make them holy (17:9-19); and (iii) addressing "Father," Jesus prays for those who believe through the disciples' word: the request is that they may be one and, thus, make known the one who sent him and loved them and that all those who belong to him be included in the love that unites the Father and the Son and participate in the glory of the Son (17:20-26).

Structurally, the prayer consists of reminiscences and requests. Recollections are made (a) of the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son, (b) of what the Father has given to the Son, (c) of what the Son has accomplished for the disciples whom the Father has given him, and (d) of the situation of the disciples. Requests are made to the Father (e) on behalf of Jesus, the Son, and (f) for the disciples.

a. The intimate relationship between the Father and the Son

During the prayer Jesus consistently acknowledges the close and unique relation existing between the Father and himself, the Son, and indicates the various dimensions of it. Twice he recalls that the Father and the Son are one (17:11, 22), which has been a theme of his previous proclamation (10:30). This unity involves their mutual and dynamic immanence: the Father is in Jesus and he is in the Father (17:21, 23).[13] It is a union of love by which the Father has imparted his glory to the Son (17:24, 26).[14] In contrast to the hostile world, Jesus knows the Father (17:25).[15] Because of their unity all those who belong to Jesus are also the Father's, and all that the Father has are also Jesus' (17:10; compare 16:15).

b. The Father's gifts to the Son

Jesus gratefully recalls also the various gifts that the Father has given him out of love for him. Everything that the Son has is from the Father, and the Father has given to Jesus especially his word making him the ultimate mediator of revelation (17:7-8).[16] Moreover, the Father has given him the divine name (17:11-12), and the glory that Jesus has, he has received from the Father before the beginning of the world (17:5, 22, 24).[17] The Father has sent him giving him power over all people in order to give eternal life to all who believe in him (17:2-3). Consequently, the disciples are those who have been given to him by the Father (17:6, 9-10).[18]

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[13] See 10:38; 14:10, 11, 20 for previous statements about their union of immanence.

[14] The Father's love for the Son has been the subject of discussion at 3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 15:9-10.

[15] Jesus has stated during his ministry that since he comes from the Father he, more than anyone else, knows him (6:46; 7:29; 8:55; 10:15).

[16] At 3:35 there was the declaration, "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand." According to John, Jesus himself is the Divine Word, which was from the beginning, become incarnate (1:1-5, 10-14, 16).

c. What Jesus has done for the disciples

Jesus during his prayer reminisces about what he has done in favour of the disciples, whom the Father has given him, as response to the relationship he has with the Father and to the gifts he has received from him. Jesus has given to the disciples the word that he himself has received from the Father, leading them to the knowledge of who Jesus is in relation to the Father and to have faith in him (17:7-8, 14) and thus receive eternal life (17:2-3).

He has revealed the Father's name to them enabling them to know and acknowledge the relation between the Father and Jesus and their relation to them and empowering them to keep the word (17:6). The revelation of the Father's name involves the manifestation of his love for the humankind in general (3:16) and for the disciples in particular (17:23) and the revelation of God as the Father of Jesus and the disciples as the children of God (1:12-13; 20:17). Jesus is to reveal the name of the Father further with his glorification so that the Father's love given to him may be communicated to the disciples and through that love he may be in them (17:25-26). Jesus has protected them in the Father's name given to him and has guarded them from being lost (17:12).[19]

As the Father has sent Jesus into the world he is sending the disciples into the world to continue the ministry entrusted to him by the Father (17:18). The sending of Jesus involved the consecration of Jesus by the Father; he has been set apart and made holy by the Father for the fulfilment of his mission (10:36). Now he consecrates himself by fulfilling the mission entrusted to him so that the disciples are consecrated in truth (17:19). Jesus himself is the truth, the revelation of God and the way to the Father (14:6). As a result of the completion of his revelatory and saving mission the disciples will be made holy and set apart to continue his mission of imparting the saving truth.

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[17] At 1:14 John has acknowledged that when the Word that was from the beginning became flesh "we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's unique Son."

[18] The Johannine Jesus has previously stated that those who believe in him are those given to him by the Father and they are those who have been drawn to him and taught by the Father (6:37, 44-45).

[19] At 6:39 Jesus has said, "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of what he has given me, but raise it up on the last day."

Jesus has given to the disciples the glory that he has received from the Father enabling them to be united, as he and the Father are one (17:22). The glory that Jesus received from the Father means the Father's dynamic presence in him resulting in their mutual immanence and unity.[20] It is the same glory, the divine reality, that Jesus has communicated to the disciples, and that should enable them to have a unity based on and similar to the unity of the Father and the Son. To the extent that the disciples have received the glory from Jesus he is glorified in them (17:10), his dynamic, saving presence becomes manifest in and through them.

d. The situation of the disciples

Jesus recalls the precarious situation of the disciples as background for the requests that he makes on their behalf. Although Jesus is about to depart from this world the disciples are to remain in the hostile world (17:11). The world[21] has not known the Father (17:25) and, therefore, it does not know who in reality Jesus is and what relationship the disciples have with the Father, and it refuses to acknowledge and accept them. On the contrary, it hates the disciples because they do not belong to it as Jesus himself did not belong to it (17:14, 16). The opposition of the world to Jesus and to the disciples has been the theme of detailed discussion in the farewell address of Jesus (15:18-25). Although the remarks of Jesus regarding the opposition of the world are made to his immediate disciples, this opposition is understood as something to be experienced by his later disciples also.

e. Request to glorify the Son

The only request on his own behalf that Jesus makes to the Father during this prayer is to glorify him, the Son (17:1-5); and it is also with this request that he begins his long prayer:

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[20] For this theme of glory, see 10:30, 37-38 together with 1:14.

[21] "World" in this context has a pejorative meaning and signifies those people who are opposed to God and his Son, Jesus Christ.

> [1]Father, the hour has come, glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, [2]inasmuch as you gave him power over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. [3]And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent. [4]I glorified you on earth by completing the work you have given me to do. [5]So now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

By obediently fulfilling his mission Jesus had begun to reveal his glory (2:11). After the arrival of the Greeks, signalling the coming of the hour for him, the Son of Man, to be glorified (12:20-23) by being lifted up and revealing his divine identity (8:28) and drawing all people to himself (12:32), he had asked the Father to glorify his name and the Father responded saying, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again" (12:28). During his farewell meal with the disciples, immediately after Judas left the scene with the intention of betraying him, Jesus began his farewell address with the announcement: "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once" (13:31-32). Jesus has been announcing the commencement of the process of his ultimate glorification through death and resurrection. In the glorification of Jesus, the Son sent by God, who is one with him, God himself is glorified: the divine glory is manifested in and through Jesus. The ultimate agent of this process of glorification is God himself and he is going to bring it to completion.

The meaning of the prayer of Jesus at 17:1-5 is to be seen against this background and in continuity with these ideas. Being aware of the arrival of the hour of his glorification Jesus asks the Father to glorify him so that he can glorify the Father by revealing him (v. 1). The reason for this request is that he has been sent by the Father to impart eternal life to those who believe in him (v. 2). However, before he can do that he has to complete his revealing and saving ministry through the process of his glorification by death and resurrection and, thus, open up the possibility to believe in him knowing and acknowledging his real identity and his relation with God as the Father (v. 3). After recalling that he has glorified the Father on earth, namely, that he has made the Father's saving presence in history experienceable through his total ministry (v. 4), Jesus now asks the Father to glorify him in his presence with the glory that he had "in the beginning," even before the world existed (v. 5). He is requesting the Father to complete the process of his glorification which is to happen by his being "lifted up"[22] by death and resurrection, whereby he can return to the Father,[23] his divine identity can be fully revealed (8:28), he can draw all to himself (12:32), and give them eternal life (3:14-15).

Although Jesus is asking the Father to glorify him it is not a prayer for his own sake. The glorification of Jesus means the completion of his saving ministry and has as its goal imparting of salvation to others. Hence, ultimately, this is a prayer that the Father may accomplish through him, through his saving plan for the salvation of humankind. He is submitting himself to the will of the Father and asking him to bring it to fulfilment.

f. Requests for the disciples

Whereas in this context Jesus prays for himself only once and that too in effect is a prayer for others, he makes several requests in favour of his disciples, both his immediate disciples and those who will become disciples later.

The first of these requests (17:11) is that the Father may keep the disciples in his name, the name that he has given to Jesus. The reason for this request is that Jesus has revealed the Father's name to them and has given them the Father's word and they have believed in him and have known and acknowledged the relation between the Father and Jesus (17:6-8). Hence, they belong to the Father and Jesus (17:10) and not to the world that is hostile towards Jesus and hates them too (17:14, 16). While he was with them he protected them in the Father's name (17:12); but now he is going to the Father leaving them in the world; they, therefore, need continued protection from the Father (17:11). Jesus highlights the contrast between the world and his disciples by remarking that he is not praying for the world, since it stubbornly remains opposed to him and shuts itself from the sphere of salvation, but only for the disciples (17:9). At 17:11 the stated purpose of keeping the disciples in the Father's name is that they may be one as the Father and Jesus are one. What is envisaged is, therefore, more than a mere protection from the attack of the world. The Father is asked to keep them in his name, namely, to keep them as related to and united with him by virtue of the revelation of his name, which is equivalent to his word, that Jesus has given them (17:6). It means to keep them in faith and thus keep them united participating in the union between the Father and the Son. At 17:13 the purpose of Jesus' statements and prayer is given: "I say these things in the world so that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves." Earlier, during the discourse, after indicating the necessity of the disciples remaining united to him in faith and producing the fruits of discipleship by observing his commandments and abiding in his love just as he has done in relation to the Father (15:1-10), Jesus has said, "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be fulfilled" (15:11). The joy of Jesus is the result of his awareness of his union with the Father and of the dynamic expression of this union in the form of accomplishing the will of the Father. The disciples will have this joy fulfilled in them when, as a result of the protection of the Father, they remain united to the Father and to the Son and to one another and manifest that union in their lives.

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[22] See the three statements in the Gospel about the Son of Man as to be "lifted up" (3:14-15; 8:28; 12:32).

[23] The return of Jesus to the Father has been predictably a recurring theme in the context of his farewell. See Jn 13:1; 14:2-4, 12, 28-29; 16:5, 7, 10, 17, 28; also 6:62; 20:17.

The prayer of Jesus at 17:11 is repeated at 17:15 in another form: "I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one." The "evil one" is the same as the "prince of this world," namely, Satan, who is opposed to Jesus and who is going to be defeated with the glorification of Jesus.[24] The evil one will try to thwart the effectiveness of Jesus' saving action by attacking his disciples who are in the world and trying to deviate them from the way that Jesus is. In this confrontation the disciples need the protection of the Father.

The protection that the Father is asked to give the disciples is expressed in more positive terms in another request in the same context: "Consecrate them in the truth; your word is the truth" (17:17). Jesus is asking the Father to set apart the disciples from the world and to transform them making them holy. This consecration is to be done in the truth, which is the Father's word, and which Jesus himself is.[25] The reason for this request is that Jesus is sending them into the world to continue his ministry, as the Father has sent him to fulfil his plan of salvation (17:18). The consecration of the disciples is to be based on Jesus consecrating himself (17:19). They have been consecrated by the word that Jesus had given them enabling them to believe in him (17:8). Now he is going to consecrate himself by completing his saving work and revealing fully his identity so that they can accept the full truth and, thus, be consecrated more completely.

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[24] See Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11.

Johannine Jesus prays specifically for his later disciples also, namely, those who are going to believe in him by accepting the proclamation that will be made (17:20-23):

> [20]I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, [21]that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. [22]The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, [23]I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

The main point of his request is their unity, "that they all may be one." The model and basis of the unity of the believers is to be the unity of the Father and the Son. The believers have to participate in the union between the Father and the Son, which is a dynamic union of mutual immanence. The believers can have this by virtue of the "glory" that Jesus has given them, which he himself received from the Father (17:22). By the communication of the divine glory the Father is in Jesus and he is in the believers (17:23). The unity of the believers is to be the testimony to the world that it is the Father who has sent Jesus and that the Father loves them as he has loved Jesus (17:21, 23).

Finally, Jesus expresses his desire to the Father that the disciples who belong to him may be with him in the place where he is going, namely, in

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[25] See Jn 14:6 where Jesus presents himself as the truth, and the hymn about the Word in the Prologue of the Gospel where Jesus is presented as the Word become flesh (1:1-5, 10-12, 14, 16).

"the Father's house," to see the glory, which the Father has given him because the Father loved him before the creation of the world (17:24). Jesus has told the disciples that he is going to the Father's house to prepare a place for them and that he will return to take them to be with him in that place (14:2-3). He has also asked the Father to glorify him in his presence with the glory that he had in his presence before the world existed (17:5). Combining these Jesus is asking the Father that, though now he is leaving the disciples in the world, since they belong to him they also should be one day with him in the presence of the Father participating in his glory. The disciples, who saw the partial revelation of the glory of Jesus during his ministry and believed in him (2:11) and who are going to experience the process of his glorification and should remain united with him in faith, are to see his glory fully when they are united with Jesus in his Father's house. The petitions of Jesus are concluded on that eschatological note.

5. Conclusion

There are some features common to all the three prayers of Jesus given in the Gospel of John. One is the familiar and intimate manner in which he addresses God: "Father." That form of address is to be seen against the background of his unique and intimate relation to God described in the Gospel as one of the principal aspects of his revelation. In his prayers Jesus shows his awareness and conviction of who he is in relation to God.

Related to that is the confidence he shows that the Father will grant his prayer. His confidence is rooted in his intimacy with God and in the fact that he is the Son who always seeks to do the will of the Father. In the longest of his prayers he has expressed this enumerating what he has done in pursuance of the Father's plan. His obedience extends to his requests too. His wishes are not different from the Father's, and what he asks for is essentially the realisation of the Father's plan of salvation.

His petitions are for the well-being and benefit of others. Even when he seemingly asks something for himself, such as glory, it is ultimately intended for furthering the divine plan. Remarkably all the three prayers have the context and also content of the glorification of Jesus, which happens through his death and resurrection and by which he fulfils his mission of saving the humankind.

The three prayers of Jesus in the Gospel are made in the presence of others and in their hearing. This he does not to show off his piety. The prayers are extensions of his revelation and also a form of proclamation inviting people to know and accept in faith God as his Father and himself as the Son sent by him, who obediently accomplishes the Father's plan for humankind.

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JESUS PRAYER AND STILLNESS OF HEART

James Aerthayil[♦]

1. Introduction

One of the many fascinating interests of contemporary times is the quest for God-experience. Traditionally, expressions like contemplation, God-experience, etc., have been used for talking about the elite. This is being challenged now. Everybody has a right to God-experience and the consequent calm and peace of mind. To achieve this, the general tendency today is to avoid elaborate traditional methods involving ritualism, and pursue simple forms of prayer. Hence, people everywhere have turned towards the Buddhists in Japan, the Hindu Yogis in India, and the monks of Mount Athos, etc., in their search for lasting experience and interiority. Zen, Yoga, Transcendental Meditation, Jesus Prayer, etc., are no longer strange words to moderns. Irrespective of their religious affiliation, people positively affirm the therapeutic and spiritual value of these methods. In the past few decades, so much has been written about these methods. The Jesus Prayer and Hesychism of the Christian East have also gained considerable attention. However, what exactly is Hesychasm and Jesus Prayer and what is their relationship are not clear to many. Through an historical and theoretico-practical survey, we make an attempt to clarify some of these aspects in the following paragraphs.

2. Hesychasm

Hesychasm or stillness of heart is a monastic movement whose origins go back to the Fathers of the Desert. It was the cradle of Eastern Christianity's ancient tradition of contemplative mysticism. Macarius, the Egyptian, said: "to become men intoxicated with God: and to become real listeners of the Word of God, one has to clam and still one's heart. This internal stillness, tranquillity, and consequent peace constitute Hesychia,

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by means of which one attains intimate union with God dwelling in the heart. "Hesychia is that state in which the Christian through grace and his own intense asceticism, re-integrates his whole being into a single *ego* that is then placed completely under the direct influence of God dwelling within him."[1] Hesychia is, thus, that state of integrated *egohood.*

Now, as a practical method, Hesychasm consists essentially in making the intelligence descend into the heart, in order to introduce the Names of Jesus, therein, by means of repeated invocation, timed to follow the respiratory rhythm, of a formula containing this Name.[2] This description combines both the original Hesychasm and the Jesus prayer, thus, representing the modern trend in the Hesychast movement. The *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite* defines Hesychasm as spiritual system of essentially contemplative orientation which finds the perfection of man in union with God through continuous prayer.[3] At the same time, the *Dictionnaire* cautiously points out the current interpretation of Hesychasm also. Today people understand by Hesychasm a certain method of prayer based on the repeated invocation of the Name of Jesus. Hesychasm is, thus, identified with the "Jesus Prayer."[4] According to Vladimir Lossky, Hesychasm is a technique of interior prayer.[5] This prayer is perpetual, as uninterrupted as breathing or the beating of the heart. Through this one becomes intensely conscious of the presence of God within oneself. It is to be noted here that Lossky has not identified Hesychasm with the Jesus Prayer, and rightly so, because Hesychasm and the Jesus Prayer are two traditions, two spiritual disciplines. A fusion or merger occurred only later. It seems necessary, therefore, to trace the historical beginnings, and the development of both Hesychasm and the Jesus Prayer, to remove the possible confusion in the minds of laymen.

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[1] G. A. Maloney, *The Breath of the Mystic*, New Jersey: Dimension Books, 1974, 21-22.

[2] J. A. Cuttat, *The Encounter of Religions*, Paris: Desclee Company, 1960, 87.

[3] Pierre Adnes, "Hesychasm," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, t. 8, col. 384.

[4] Pierre Adnes, "Hesychasm," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, t. 8, col. 381.

[5] See Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, London: James Clarke and Co. Ltd., 1973, 209.

3. The Beginning and Development of Hesychasm

As a programme of spiritual life, Hesychasm takes its origin from the illuminative revelation received by St. Arsenius from above: "Arsenius, flee, keep silence, and remain tranquil; these are the roots of impeccability."[6] The third stage, remaining tranquil is the actual state of Hesychia: tranquillity, peace and quietude. The preceding two stages are, however, important and necessary. The first stage of Hesychia is solitude, the *fuqa mundi et hominum.*[7] Solitude is a primary condition for concentration and contemplation. Even philosophers recommended it as a necessary pre-requisite for philosophic contemplation.[8] Right from the beginning of monastic life, the Christian monks realized the importance of fleeing from the world, and of solitude. Evagrius of Pontus (d. 399), known as the theologian of the desert, said that real gnosis is reserved only for the solitaries. The success of monastic life, according to him, depends on the degree of solitude.[9] Many other Fathers of the Desert have written eulogies on solitude.[10]

The second stage of Hesychasm is silence.[11] According to the Fathers, it is silence that teaches us to pray well. Hence, they exhorted the monks to observe absolute silence. There are shining examples of numerous saints and holy persons of the monastic period, who, through silence, attained tranquillity and union with God.[12] Thus, in the Hesychast spirituality, silence has a unique place. These first two steps are actually external and, therefore, they are only a preparation for the real Hesychia, namely, interior peace and tranquillity. This is the quietude of the heart, the operations of which having been more or less controlled through the first two stages, devoid of any unnecessary thought or concern that disturbs it. The one who reaches this stage is a real Hesychast; he or she can control all thoughts and can attain that "internal sobriety – *nepsis*."[13]

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[6] P.G. 65, 88c.

[7] Irenne Hausherr, *Hesychasme et Priere*, Rome: Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 176, 1966, 177f.

[8] See Plato, *De Republica*, VI, 496 d.

[9] *Epistola* 41, Frankenberg, Berlin: Evagrius Poticies, 1912, 595.

[10] See Apophthegmata Patrum, P.G., 65, 71-440.

[11] See I. Hausherr, *Hesychasme te Priere*, 199f.

[12] See P.G., 82, 141f., 142f; P.G. 31 1197f.

4. The Way to Stillness

One may wonder, perhaps, at the merely secular character of this sort of Hesychia. Is it really a spiritual system for God-realization? Yes, it is both an environment and a source of prayer. It does not exist but for prayer. There is, thus, a relationship between Hesychasm and prayer. Hesychasm aims at prayer and God-experience. It s a pre-requisite for contemplative life; strictly speaking, it is contemplative life itself. Hence, a Hesychast is a man of prayer by vocation. St. John Climacus stresses this point when he defines a Hesychast in his *Ladder of Paradise*:

> The Hesychast is one who aspires to circumscribe the incorporeal in the dwelling of flesh; he is a sort of terrestrial angel who has liberated his prayer from all laziness and negligence. He is the one who can cry aloud: "my heart is ready, O Lord" (Ps 56:8). He says: "I sleep, but my heart keeps vigil" (Cant 5:2). For a king, wealth and population of his country are his power. The power of a Hesychast is the abundance of prayer.[14]

From the Egyptian deserts, Hesychasm gradually spread to the monasteries of Constantinople, where St. Simon the New Theologian (949-1022), the author of the *Hymns of Divine Love* became the principal proponent. Later, Mount Athos became the centre of Hesychasm. There a certain Nicephorus, the Hesychast of the thirteenth century, invented a "psycho-physical method" of Hesychasm. He was greatly influenced by the idea of Evagrius, Macarius and Climacus that the heart is the centre of the psychophysical organism. His precise problem was how to impress the Name of Jesus on the heart. The solution offered is a very practical one:

> You know that we breathe our breath in and out, only because of our heart... So, as I have said, sit down, recollect you mind, draw it – I am speaking of your mind – in your nostrils; that is the path the breath takes to reach the heart. Drive it; force it to go down to your heart with the air you breathe in. When it is there, you will see the joy that follows; you will have nothing to regret. As a man who has

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[13] P. Adnes, "Hesychasme," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, col. 391.

[14] St. John Climacus, "The Ladder of Paradise," 27, P.G. 88, 1097, 1100a.

> been away from home for a long time cannot restrain his joy at seeing his wife and children again, so that spirit overflows with joy and unspeakable delights when it is united again to the soul.... Next you must know that as long as your spirit abides there, you must not remain silent or idle. Have no other occupation or meditation than the cry of "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me." Under no circumstances give yourself any rest. This practice protects your spirit from wandering and makes it inaccessible to the suggestions of the enemy, and lifts it up every day in love and desire for God.[15]

This Nicephorian technique is based on Macarian anthropology, which is of Semitic origin. Man is, therefore, understood as an indivisible psychosomatic unity constituted of various elements such as body, soul, spirit and heart.[16] This is not a new invention; this has been the contention of the Fathers of the Orient. Later theologians and writers also subscribed to this view and they improved upon the theory of Nicephorus. Thus, the Hesychast method, in its developed form, spread all over the religious world of Byzantium, Slavic countries and Russia, and it was theologically supported by great personalities like Gregory Palamas. The following four steps are found in the newly combined Hesychast method of prayer:

a. This striving towards a state of total rest or quiet, which excludes reading, psalmody, meditation, etc.

b. Practices designed to help the concentration of mind such as physical immobility, control or suspension of breathing, fixation of the eyes on the heart, stomach and the navel in the order to "let the mind go back into the heart." This helps total concentration and keeps the Name of Jesus in the heart.

c. The repetition of Jesus Prayer.

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[15] Nicephorus, "On Guarding the Heart," P.G., 147. 961-966.

[16] Theophane the Recluse (1815-1894), a Russian ascetic, in his famous book "What is Prayer," elaborates the orthodox anthropology according to the Semitic and Hesychast tradition. See Timothy Ware, ed., *The Art of Prayer: An Orthodox Anthology*, London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1966, 17-20.

d. The feeling of an inner warmth and physical perception of a divine light or "the light of Tabor."[17]

The Light of Tabor represents the glorious Jesus who transfigured on Mount Tabor so as to be seen and experienced. The "Taboric experience" they had, is the goal of the Hesychast, too. A total union with the Risen Lord is the end-result of a systematic practice of Hesychasm.

5. The Jesus Prayer

The Hesychast method of prayer integrated into itself the ancient prayer formula known as the Jesus Prayer. As noted above, total integration came only with Nicephorus in the 13th century. Still the Jesus Prayer has a value of its own and it is an appealing prayer-form both in the East and in the West. As a technical expression in the Oriental spirituality, it designates the invocation of the Name of Jesus either by itself or in a traditional formula. The known formula, accredited falsely to St. John Chrysostom, reads: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." This formula is highly esteemed in the Orthodox tradition, so much so that some of the Orthodox people daresay that it can substitute even for the Divine Office. Brief in form, it leads the soul to concentration and sets it face to face with God. Its aim is union with the Person of Jesus.

6. Historical Development

The scriptural instructions "pray always" (Lk 18.1), "pray at all times" (Eph 6:18), and "pray without ceasing" (1 Thes 5:17) were literally understood by the Fathers of the Desert. They proposed many ways to put this instruction into practice. "To live with right intention," "*Ora et Labora*," "Evagrian intellectual prayer," Ejaculatory prayers," "Remembrance of God," and "Jesus Prayer" are some of the methods used by them to attain their goal.[18] In course of time, Jesus Prayer attracted the attention of the desert monks, and got established among them as the favourite method of conversing with God.

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[17] See A Monk of the Eastern Church, *Orthodox Spirituality: An Outline of the Orthodox Ascetical and Mystical Tradition*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1945, 19-20.

[18] See *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, t. 2. col. 1860-1862; 2286-87; t. 7. col. 392-393; also see H. Bacht, "Meditatio in dem altesten Monchsquellen," in *Geist und Leben* 28 (1955), 360-373.

In its primitive form, the Jesus Prayer seems to be the *Kyrie eleison*. When Macarius, the Egyptian (born c. 300), was asked by his disciples as to how one should pray, the old man replied: "There is no need to waste time with words; it is enough to hold out your hands and say: 'Lord according to your desire and your wisdom, have mercy.' If you are hard-pressed in the struggle, say: 'Lord save me.' He knows what is best for you and He will have mercy on you."[19] Historically, it is the Macarian formula that took the shape of *Kyrie eleison* and found its way into all the Oriental liturgies.

The most important centre for the diffusion of Hesychasm after the fifth century was the famous monastery of Mount Sinai. In the thought of the founders of the monastery, the Sinaitic vision of Moses is linked to the theophany of Mount Tabor; and experiencing the "Light of Tabor" is regarded as the goal of their spirituality.[20] The great Sinaitic doctor, St. John Climacus, gave a clear orientation to the spirituality of the monks of Sinai through his famous work *The Ladder of Paradise*.[21] The core of the mysticism of "The Ladder" is invocation of the Name of Jesus. "May the Name of Jesus be united with your breath; then you will understand the value of solitude." Thus, he asks us to combine our breathing and the recitation of the Jesus Prayer, so that the "memory of Jesus" may be unceasingly present to our heart. The constant presence of Jesus in the heart will give us an experience of the luminous vision of Mount Tabor. Simon the New Theologian, Nicephorus the Hesychast, Gregory Palamas, and others, consolidated and propagated the tradition of Jesus Prayer through their works and examples. By the end of the fourteenth century, it penetrated into the Slavic Orient, and Russia. It was Nilus Sorsky (1433-1508) who popularised it among the monks and common people of

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[19] *Petite Philocalie* (French translation by Gouillard), Paris: Edition des Cahiers du sud, 1953, 58.

[20] See John Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality*, USA: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974, 34.

[21] For the content and details of *The Ladder*, see Guerric Couillean, "St. Jean Climaque," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, t.8, col. 369-389; J. R. Martin, *The Illustration of the Heavenly Ladder of John* Climacus, Princeton, 1954; W. Volker, Scala Paradisi, *Eine Studie zu Johannes Climacus und zugleich eine Vorstudie zu Symeon dem neuen Theologen*, Wiesbaden, 1968.

Russia.[22] The publication of the *Philokalia*,[23] and its translation into various modern languages,[24] made the Jesus Prayer still more popular. The appearance of the Russian spiritual classic *The Way of a Pilgrim* in the nineteenth century is another landmark in the history of the Jesus Prayer.[25].

7. The Practice of Jesus Prayer[26]

Briefly, the practice of Jesus Prayer, according to the teachings of the ascetics, has three steps and aspects. The first step consists in the repeated oral recitation of the words: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner." According to *The Way of the Pilgrim*, one has to say this prayer, first 3000 times, then 6000 times and later 12000 times per day. The pilgrim describes vividly his initial difficulties in finishing the number 12000: "This ceaseless saying of the Prayer brought a certain amount of weariness; my tongue felt numbed, I had a stiff sort of feeling in my jaws..."[27] But once he had finished the prescribed number, he found great pleasure, satisfaction and enrichment in it. The Pilgrim used a sort of Rosary to count his prayers. This is a general tradition in Russia. Another traditional practice, following the Jesus Prayer, consists also of acts of inclination and prostration. But what is essential and constant throughout the Prayer is attention to and concentration on the meaning of the words through a deliberate act of the will.

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[22] See "St. Nilus Sorsky, the Teacher of Spiritual Prayer" in G. P. Fedotov, ed., *A Treasury of Russian Spirituality*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965, 85-133.

[23] *Philokalia* literally means "The love of spiritual beauty." It is an anthology of the mystical and ascetical writings by the fathers of the Eastern Churches over a period of eleven centuries, edited by Macarius of Corinth and Nicodemus Hagiorite at Venice in 1782.

[24] In Russian, *Philokalia* is known as "*Dobrotolyubie*." Theophane the Recluse published a new and elaborate edition of *Dobrotolyubie* in five volumes between 1877 and 1913. This accounts for the wider popularity of *Philokalia* in Russia.

[25] *The Way of a Pilgrim*, translated from the Russian original by R. M. French and published by SPCK, London, 1941, is a story of a pilgrim's learning, practising and teaching a way of praying. The original Russian title of this book rendered in English as the "Candid Narratives of Pilgrim to His Spiritual Father."

[26] For the details of the practice of Jesus Prayer, see Pierre Adnes, "Jesus (*Priere a*)," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, T.8. col. 1126-1150; A Monk of the Eastern Church, *On the Invocation of the Name of Jesus*, London: St. Basil's House, 1949; I. Hausherr, *Noms du Christ et Voies D'oraison*, Roma: Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 157, 1960.

[27] *The Way of a Pilgrim*, 14.

In course of time, the Prayer becomes more inward, and the mind repeats it without the movement of lips or tongue. With this increasing inwardness, the Payer gradually acquires a rhythm of its own, at times singing within us almost spontaneously, without any conscious effort on the part of the will.[28] This is the second stage of Jesus Prayer. The Pilgrim speaks about this second stage of the Prayer in the following words:

> After no great lapse of time, I had the feeling that the Prayer had, so to speak, by its own action passed from my lips to my heart. That is to say, it seemed as though my heart in its ordinary beating began to say the words of the Prayer, within, at each beat. Thus, for example, one, "Lord," two, "Jesus", three, "Christ," and so on. I gave up saying the Prayer with my lips. I simply listened carefully to what my heart was saying. It seemed as though my eyes looked right down into it... Then I felt something like a slight pain in my heart, and in my thoughts so great a love for Jesus Christ... Further, there came into my heart a gracious warmth which spread through my whole breast...[29]

Finally, the Prayer enters into the heart dominating the entire personality. Its rhythm is identified more and more with the movement of the heart, until at last, it becomes unceasing. What originally required a painful and strenuous effort is now an inexhaustible source of joy and ease. The Jesus Prayer continues within even though one is engaged in other activities.[30] This stage of the Prayer cannot be adequately expressed in words. It is a foretaste of that final stage where God becomes all in all (1 Cor 12:6). But to arrive at this stage of intimate union with Jesus, one has to undergo some purification through asceticism and practice of virtues. The Pilgrim speaks also about the trials and purifications he had undergone to reach this stage. Once it is attained, the Prayer becomes quite natural, an urgent and ardent need:

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[28] Ware, *The Art of Prayer*, 28.

[29] *The Way of a Pilgrim*, 19-20.

[30] Ware, *The Art of Prayer*, 28.

> I felt as it were hungry "for prayer, an urgent need to pour out my soul in prayer... I felt as though there were in my heart a sort of flood struggling to burst out and flow through all my limbs. To hold it back caused me severe, even if comforting, pain in the heart, a pain which needed to be calmed and satisfied in the silence of prayer. And now I saw why those who really practise interior self-acting prayer have fled from the company of men and hidden themselves in unknown places.[31]

The Pilgrim who reached this last stage of the Prayer has undergone a total transformation because of his intense union with God. Now he sees and experiences the name of Jesus everywhere. The whole nature becomes for him a divine milieu, which enkindles in him zeal, thankfulness, and love for the Name of Jesus. He explains the consequences of such a state:

> The Prayer of my heart gave me such consolation that I felt there was no happier person on earth than I, and I doubted if there could be greater and fuller happiness in the Kingdom of Heaven. Not only did I feel this in my own soul, but the whole outside world also seemed to me full of charm and delight. Everything drew me to love and gratefulness to God: people, trees, plants, and animals. I saw them all as my kinsfolk; I found in all of them the magic of the Name of Jesus. Sometimes I felt as light, as though I had no body and was floating happily through the air, instead of walking. Sometimes when I withdrew into myself I saw clearly all my internal organs, and was filled with wonder at the wisdom with which the human body is made. Sometimes I felt as joyful as if I had been made the Tsar. And at all such times of happiness, I wished that God would let death come quickly, and let me pour out my heart in thankfulness at His feet in the world of spirits.[32]

We may conclude this part of our study by pointing out certain specific characteristics and advantages of the Jesus Prayer:

a. It is short.
b. It is meant to be frequently repeated.

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[31] *The Way of a Pilgrim*, 98.

[32] *The Way of a Pilgrim*, 105-106.

c. It is addressed to Jesus Christ.
d. It refers to his various titles.
e. It implores his mercy.
f. It calls the supplicant "a sinner."
g. It consists in a secret activity of the heart.
h. Above all, it is a means to arrive at the goal of our interior life, namely union with God through continuous prayer.[33]

8. The Theology of Jesus Prayer and Hesychasm

As a psychophysical method of prayer, Hesychasm is rooted in the tradition of the Greek Fathers and the early Church. Still the Nicephorian techniques can be – and, in fact, it has been – misunderstood and misinterpreted, as a mere physical exercise. It was Gregory Palamas (1296-1359) who gave a theological interpretation to Hesychasm and really positioned it in the ecclesial context. Hence, Palamas is known as the Theologian of Hesychasm. He always upheld the biblical concept of man, of integral man. By reason of incarnation, the whole man is enabled to receive the grace of God, and his life is fulfilled only when he, the whole man with all his bodily being, achieves full participation in the life of God. Hesychasm is a way to gain this full participation. Since "we are the temples of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us" (1 Cor 6:19), God is to be sought and found within and not outside. The light of Tabor, which is the ultimate goal of Hesychasm, must be experienced within. The "Taborite light" with which Hesychasts always describe their experience of God, is the light that appeared to the Lord's disciples at His transfiguration on Mount Tabor.[34] The disciples experienced the light of Tabor only because of the presence of the "transfigured or the glorious Lord." Now Hesychasm makes the presence of the glorious Lord, Jesus Christ the Son of God, actual and concrete through its psychophysical technique and the invocation of the Name of Jesus. It should be remembered here, however, that it is not the technique that automatically produces the effects, but the presence of Jesus. Jesus' personal presence makes even the "material body" holy and divine.

Since Jesus Prayer or the invocation of the Name of Jesus is found at the centre of the Hesychast spirituality, we now turn to the theological meaning and content of Jesus Prayer. We may begin with the words of the pilgrim himself. When a question was put to him, "which is the best, the Prayer of Jesus or the Gospel?" he replied:

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[33] Hausherr, *Noms du Christ et Voies D'oraison*, 125.

[34] Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality*, 116.

> It is all one and the same thing. What the Gospel is, that the Prayer of Jesus also is, for the divine Name of Jesus holds in itself the whole Gospel truth. The Holy Fathers say that the Prayer of Jesus is a summary of the Gospels.[35]

These words articulate for us the whole meaning of the Jesus Prayer. The Prayer itself is composed of biblical words, taken from different biblical passages: the first part of the prayer is from Mt 14:33; 16:16; 16:63; Acts 16:31; and the second part, i.e., the prayer for mercy is from Mt 20:31; Mk 10:46; Lk 18:38; Lk 1:13; Mt 15:22; Lk 18:13; etc. The title given to Jesus in the Prayer, elicited out of these texts, places a strong accent on the transcendence of Jesus: He is the Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God. Through this prayer, therefore, he is given the worship and adoration, which is due to the divine Majesty. The invocation of the Name actually brings Jesus to our mind. The Name is the symbol and bearer of the Person of Christ. The name both signifies Jesus' presence and actualises its reality. This is the motivation behind the adoration given to Him... "God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend" (Phil 2:9-10). Hence, to pronounce thoughtfully the Name of Jesus is to know the exalted state of the Lord; and in this knowledge we adore and worship Him.[36]

Secondly, the Jesus Prayer brings home to us that we are sinners and are in need of His mercy. What St. James said: "Realize that you have sinned" (James 4:7) points to this existential exigency in Christian life. Only a 'sin-consciousness' and a felt-need for forgiveness will lead us to a saviour-God. The Jesus Prayer does it excellently. In it we are invoking the Name of Jesus, which means Saviour, and we ask for salvation. Forgiveness and salvation come only through Jesus, because "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Thus, the Name of Jesus is already a mystery of salvation. The invocation is a way of appropriating this mystery. This appropriation brings with it the fundamental experience of divine forgiveness and reconciliation.

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[35] *The Way of a Pilgrim*, 29.

[36] A Monk of the Eastern Church, *On the Invocation of the Name of Jesus*, 9.

9. Conclusion

These methods of Prayer are not merely a mechanical technique to achieve a certain spiritual condition. It has been, unfortunately, presented in this form by some authors.[37] The aim of exterior discipline is very clear; it is certainly one of assisting concentration. But the whole attention must be given to the words of the Jesus Prayer. This actually makes the heart ready for the permanent indwelling of grace by constantly guarding its interior purity.[38] Thus, Hesychasm is not merely a psychophysical method or an ejaculatory prayer. It is a way of life, as natural as breathing. It enables us to have a real encounter with the Person of Jesus at the core of our heart, an encounter that is at the same time transformative and divinising. Even without its techniques, the invocation has much more value than an ejaculatory prayer. Though its form is short being an ejaculatory prayer, its content is originally biblical and its significance theological. It always maintains in the hearts of men, the thoughts and habitual sentiments of the presence of the Saviour's mercy.

One should also be aware of the dangers inherent in Hesychasm. The amount of strain and automatism involved in the Hesychast method may tend to curtail our inner spiritual freedom. Consequently, when the technique apparently fails to produce the desired result, the aspirant abandons all spiritual efforts and techniques, without ever trying to surrender himself or herself to the divine will. Secondly, to follow the techniques of Prayer, one should have a spiritual instructor. The availability of a spiritual director for every common man is not always guaranteed. If one begins the 'techniques' with little knowledge and without proper guidance, he or she may run the risk of total failure and face terrible disappointment. Belated complaint of a "technical inadequacy" for the apparent silence of grace is no justification for the failure of one's spiritual life.

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[37] Vladimir Lossky complains that Jugie and Hausherr maintained the view that Hesychasts are ignorant monks of a grossly materialist turn of mind, who imagined that the seat of the soul is the navel, and who thought that the Holy Spirit of God was contained in our physical breathing, etc. This evidently is only a caricature. See Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 210. M. Jugie has his scholarly work, *Theologia Dogmatica Christianorum Orientalium*, 5 vols., Paris, 1935.

[38] Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 211.

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Survey:

PRAYER IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Ignatius Jesudasan[◆]

Mention of prayer is made so often in the book of Luke "Acts of the Apostles" that it occurs to one to think that demonstrating the importance and power of prayer is a sub-theme of this historical work. Let us look into the text to locate the theme in different contexts, where it occurs.

The first mention of prayer occurs in 1:14, following verse 13 that lists the names of the eleven disciples of Jesus, and it reads: "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers." The verse does not state what they prayed or made supplication for. In the context of the reported words of Jesus, "you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (1:8), we may presume that they were praying for the power of the Holy Spirit, with which they were to be witnesses to Jesus in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

The second mention of prayer occurs when Peter proposed about a hundred and twenty disciples gathered in the upper room, that they choose one person, to fill the vacancy created by Judas's treachery and tragic end, from among those who had accompanied them all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from them, so that he must become a witness of His resurrection with the eleven. It was when the gathering proposed Joseph, called Barsabas, surnamed Justus, and Mathias, that they made their decision with the prayer: "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." After their prayer, they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Mathias. He was, thus, numbered with the eleven apostles (1:15-26). They prayed before a decision, which was both symbolically and

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substantively important to the group's ministry of witnessing to Jesus. Though they pray, the place where they recognize the divine mind and will manifesting itself is the lots they themselves cast. Prayer, therefore, did not stop them from acting on their own accustomed ways of making choices or decisions. Divine intervention in this case is taken as operative in and identical with their conventional way of making choices and decisions. But there was no room for favouritism in the casting of lots.

Chapter two of Acts, which narrates the story of the disciples being filled with the Spirit, descending on them as wind and fire, does not explicitly relate it to their prayer, but is silent on it. Was the power from above given them because it had already been promised or in answer to their prayer? Peter traces it all in the Acts, to the promise of God, as stated in prophet Joel, to pour out His Spirit on His menservants and maidservants on "the last days," so that they should prophesy (2:18). The prophecy here is the testimony of the disciples to the resurrection of Jesus. This is what Peter is presented as giving in his whole speech in Acts 2. He does it the whole time by citing the prophets, particularly Isaiah and the Psalms attributed to prophet and King, David. The refrain of his speech is that God the Father gave Jesus the Holy Spirit He had promised through the prophets, and seated him on His right hand, making him Lord and Christ, who, in turn, pours out that Spirit on all to whom it has been promised by him and God the Father. This is what the disciples have received. Peter announces the promise as made to his hearers and their children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call. Luke's narrative states that as many as three thousand souls, who gladly received Peter's word of testimony, were baptized and added to the number of the disciples (2:22-41).

Though there is no explicit word in all this about prayer, the citation from Psalms 68:18 and 110:1 in Acts 2:34-35, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool,'" can be construed as an implicit allusion to the state of the church and its prayer as a time of waiting in eager expectation and hope-filled anticipation of the fulfilment of the promise and its own holy desire for it. That was the state in which the earthly life of Jesus had been all his earthly life long. The very next verse 42 of chapter 2 returns to the refrain of prayer once again: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers."

The last 5 verses of chapter 2 would go to reinforce the impact of prayer, in the sense referred to above, on all that the church was experiencing of fulfilment and realization of its patient waiting in long-suffering: namely, of the fear (of God) that came upon every soul, and the many wonders and signs done through the apostles, all who believed being together, selling their goods and possessions and dividing them among all according to need, having all things in common, so continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, eating their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people, the Lord adding to the church daily those who were being saved (2:42-47).

How it was related to their prayer is not made explicit. Seldom would an experience be explained in theoretically analytical terms in a school or house of prayer. It would only be addressed to the experience of the newcomers, calling upon them to discover for themselves how everything hangs together with prayer as desire, search and discovery or experience of what was sought. It is as experience and not as theory that it is communicated. Therefore, only in and as experience it can be appropriated, integrated and understood. If we today have difficulty to understand and integrate it, it is because our life style and possessions are no longer in common as it was in the early church. Both individually and institutionally we are too possessive, un-sharing with and un-caring of one another and of the outsiders in our thought and practice to experience the Spirit, which makes us all one in Christ. Our very prayer is too narrowly individualistic. The more we possess and privatise, the less can we feel the power of the spirit of Christ and of his resurrection, which heals the sick, as a sign of greater things to come.

It is striking, and could not be by chance or coincidence, that chapter 3 of Acts, which deals with the healing of the born-lame man by Peter and John, is situated in a context of prayer, prefaced with the words, "Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour." At the healing, the lame man responds with prayer of praise to God (3:9). Peter attributes his healing to faith in the name of Jesus, and attributes that faith itself as coming through Jesus (3:16). It is, therefore, most likely that he is referring to prayer of faith in Jesus' name.

Being detained and warned by the chief priests and the Sanhedrin not to speak in Jesus' name, the two disciples report the matter to their companions, whose response Luke records as prayer to God with one accord: "Look, Lord, on their threats, and grant to your servants that with all boldness they may speak your word, by stretching out your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus." (4:29-30) Luke hastens to add, "When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness."

If the church prayed for signs and wonders to heal the sick, it surely believed the miracles to be the result of and related to prayer. Implicitly then, Jesus' own acts of healing are attributed to the power of his prayer. It is in this background that Luke is able to report a little later in his narrative, "through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch... And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them … and they were all healed (5:12-16). The apostles were even miraculously freed from the common prison where the high priest had placed them (5:17-20).

Prayer figures prominently once again as the apostles' role, together with the ministry of the Word in the context of the complaint of the Hellenists about their widows being neglected as against the Hebrew ones, in the daily distribution of food. At this the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables." So they asked the brethren to choose seven wise men of the Spirit whom they would appoint to table duty, while they would give themselves "continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word" (6:1-4).

Prayer ruled not only life, but also and even more death in the church. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, serves as an illustrious example of it. It is amidst a Jesus-like prayer of forgiveness for his murderous assailants that Stephen die of stoning for his Christian witness (7:60). It is a special kind of prayer, namely one for one's enemies and persecutors, one very close to Jesus' own teaching and example.

The next instance or kind of prayer, which figures in the Acts, is one of intercession for a sinner from within the community of believers or the baptized. It relates concretely to the case of Simon, the magician of Samaria, who had also received baptism from Philip. Then the apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to Samaria to pray over the baptized of Samaria that the Holy Spirit might come upon them. When Simon saw their power, he asked to buy that power from them. Upon Peter rebuking him to pray God for forgiveness for his wicked thought, Simon himself requested the apostles to pray for God's forgiveness over him (8:14-24).

One of the most dramatic instances of prayer reported in the Acts relates to the conversion-conversation of Saul with Jesus, who appeared to him on his way to Damascus to arrest the believers in Jesus' name. Dramatic about this instance is not only the suddenness of its unexpected quality, but also its conversational character with Jesus, whom Saul spontaneously or unwittingly addresses as Lord (9:4-7). This is what makes that conversation an implicit act and exercise of faith and, therefore, also prayer. Saul is turned to him whom he was trying to chase or kick out of Jewish and human history.

Such a radical and deep imprinting mystical encounter with Jesus converted a persecutor into an eventual missionary and apostle of Jesus. His persecuting fervour against Christians must have been fired by the same zeal for the truth as he later demonstrated for the name of Jesus, when once he came to repose his faith in it. Prayer must have been the most natural and spontaneous thing to him, like the air he breathed to keep himself alive. Even as a Jew, he must have been in continuous conversation with God in history. His openness to experience was the hallmark of his openness to revelations and prayers of a mystical order. It is disarming of him that he confessed to them in his most intimate self-revelations.

It is again by reason of Saul's "praying," according to Luke-Acts, that the disciple named Ananias is persuaded by God to go to inquire about him in the house of Judas. In words that are reminiscent of the story of prophet Jonas being sent to Nineveh, Saul's prayer is the argument God himself is said to have given Ananias to persuade the frightened and reluctant disciple to go to him (9:10-16, especially verse 11).

9:31 speaks of the churches throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria having peace and being edified, walking in the fear of the Lord and multiplying in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and may in all probability be a reference to the church gaining strength through continuing in prayer. Peter raising the dead but charitable Tabitha of Joppa to life at the request of the Christian widows helped by the dead woman of good works, is again attributed to his kneeling and praying over her dead body (9: 40). It is a story exactly reminiscent of Jesus raising the daughter of Jairus. The conveyed message is that prayer can and does work wonders.

Another story, which would confirm and in part resemble what I said about Paul praying, as the cause and explanation of his conversion, is that of the Gentile centurion Cornelius of Caesarea, to whom an angel of God appeared in a vision about the ninth hour of the day (prayer time, as already referred to in Acts 3:1). It is implicit that Cornelius was praying when he received the vision, which instructed him to send for Peter at Joppa, who would tell him what he must do. Luke makes this implication explicit in the words put into the angel's mouth: "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God" (10:1-6; see especially verse 4). Verse 2, " a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always," makes it clear beyond doubt that what is meant is habitual prayer.

In a corresponding parallelism to the vision of Ananias in the story of the conversion of Saul, Peter receives a vision in prayer again, at the sixth hour and on housetop, reminiscent of Joseph's dreams, as to what he is to do next. The vision and the arrival of Cornelius's messengers coincide (10:9-22). If Paul was a man of prayer, Peter was not less of it. They both received in prayer their inspiration and instruction as to what they are to do in and for the church and the faith. Peter was able to use the fact of the vision in prayer to justify his action in living and eating with Gentiles (11:5-18). This was an important and decisive moment in the life of the early church. What the book of Acts establishes is that if the Lord worked with and through the apostles, it was because prayer stood at the heart of all significant decisions in the early apostolic church.

BOOK REVIEWS

John Chryssavgis, ed., ***Cosmic Grace and Humble Prayer: The Ecological Vision of the Green Patriarch Bartholomew I,*** Michigan, Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003, pages xii + 351, ISBN: 0-8028-2169-3.

Cosmic Grace and Humble Prayer analyses the ecological vision of the Green Patriarch Bartholomew I. The work is edited and translated from the original Greek by John Chryssavgis with a foreword by Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon. There is a beautiful unity between the foreword, acknowledgements, long introduction and the text of the book. Metropolitan John of Pergamon points out that the present day ecological crisis is rooted in theology, and it is above all a spiritual problem. The church has to revise her pastoral teachings, and work as to transform the mentality and attitude of modern people, making them realize that the protection of the natural environment is a fundamental religious obligation demanded from humankind by God himself. Human being is the priest of creation who takes the world in his hands as a 'gift' and refers it back to God in thankfulness by sharing it with others in love which itself is a eucharistic action and a manifestation of an ascetic mentality enabling him to overcome his selfishness.

In the acknowledgements gratitude for the permission to include the painting "Christopsaro-Christfish" by Gabriel Pentzikis on the cover is expressed. This picture depicts a fish in the baptismal font, surrounded by people – clergy and monastic – in mystical prayer and solemn procession. As Pentzikis' art is highly transfigurative revealing a transformed world pointing to the "new heaven and new earth" (Rev 21:1), it is very much symbolic and fitting to be the cover design of the present volume.

In the long introduction the editor draws a biographical sketch of the ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I giving a history of his initiatives and action, especially in the field of environment and ecology.

The "Orthodox theology and the environment" given in the introduction is very helpful to understand the text of the book with its theological content, style and expression. The editor says that he has revised the translations from the original Greek and edited the texts significantly, though not substantially to provide greater uniformity and smoother accessibility to a general readership. Titles have been created in order to replace abstract headings.

The editor very correctly says in the introduction that before we can effectively deal with problems of our environment, we must change our world-image, which, in turn, means that we must change our self-image. Otherwise, we are simply dealing with symptoms, not with their causes. The root of the problem is religious.

The erudite introduction is a fitting prelude to the text unfolding the unity of thought, worship and praxis in the orthodox world. There is also an implicit appeal to all "people of good will" to work for restoring the connections between things, communion between religions and peoples, reconciliation between God and cosmos. "God reconciled to himself all things in heaven and on earth in Christ by the blood on the cross" (Col 1:20).

The book is divided into three parts and Part I is titled "Call to Prayer: Encyclical Letters." Out of the 12 encyclical letters the first two are signed by patriarch Demetrios I, the former one written on September 1, 1989 declaring September 1st of every year, which is also the first day of the ecclesiastical year of the Orthodox church as the day of prayer for the protection of the environment. This letter gives theological reasons for its concern on environmental protection and the rationale behind the declaration of September 1 as the day of environmental protection. The second letter reminds that we have to treat the environment as its responsible stewards and not as its users.

Then we have ten messages from the ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I which are written for September 1 starting from 1992 to 2002 manifesting his deep and genuine ecological concerns and anxieties and the solutions. The prayers intended for remedying this modern catastrophe also highlight the biblico-theological as well as Christian anthropological foundations behind his viewpoints.

Part II, as its very title points out, contains addresses and statements of the Patriarch numbering eleven of them plus one which is a common message of the primates.

Part III, "Interviews and Comments," forms the last section which consists of excerpts from the Patriarch's interviews to different groups of people underlining his commitment and involvement in environmental issues which is not a matter of public relations but of theological convictions. The common declaration on Environmental Ethics by Pope John Paul II and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I in this section is a clear testimony to the agony of the two spiritual leaders of human problems such as violence, starvation and ecological disasters.

All the three parts, thus, bring together the encyclical letters, addresses and statements, interviews and comments of the Green Patriarch, Bartholomew I, consistently emphasizing his ecological and environmental concerns even when he refers to other issues such as justice, poverty and globalisation and he is making his points clear in relation to the respective issues. His deep ecological vision can be summarized as follows: we Christians must act today as nature's voice in raising its plea for salvation before the throne of God. The Orthodox Church teaches us that it is the destiny of humankind to restore the proper relationship between God and the world, just as it was in the Garden of Eden. It has become painfully apparent that humanity, both individually and collectively, no longer perceives the natural order as a sign and a sacrament of God, but rather as an object of exploitation. There is need for repentance that must be accompanied by three soundly focussed principles, which manifest the ethos of the Orthodox Church:

1. The eucharistic ethos which means using the earth's natural resources with thankfulness, offering them back to God, together with ourselves.

2. The ascetic ethos of Orthodoxy involves fasting and other spiritual works.

3. Liturgical ethos emphasizes community concern and sharing.

We are dutifully reminded by the Church that God himself placed in us "the message of reconciliation" (II Cor 5:19), that he entrusted to

Christians the proclamation of the Gospel, the message of reconciliation, loving communion of God with humankind and the natural world.

Prayer of the Orthodox Church with its head, the patriarch is that violence must not be inflicted on nature as well as we must also be saved from natural calamities.

The photos and the icons included in the book give a magnificent visual appeal to the overall panoramic appearance of the book. The select sources given on the closing pages are useful for those interested in further research and study on the topic of ecology and environment. The index certainly makes easier and smoother reference to this book.

Repetitions and repetitiveness in this work are justified from the point of pedagogical purpose which could cover up the monotony.

The editor has successfully brought out the ecological vision of the Green Patriarch Bartholomew I, which is very much relevant in our times.

Isaac Arickappillil

Jacob Abraham, ***The Quest for the Spiritual Neuron*****,** Religion and Science Series, No.1, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2004, pages 136, ISBN: 81-86861-63-7.

Science and religion have always been at odds with each other. It was more a war of attrition in which, until two or three centuries ago, religion had an upper hand. But, recently, science has established its arrogant dominance over religion, demeaning many of the sacred beliefs of religion as nothing but the fruit of ignorance, fear, and superstition.

Dr. Jacob Abraham, the author of *The Quest for the Spiritual Neuron*, however, does not see any ground for mutual suspicion and animosity between religion and science. He, instead, sees science and religion as complementary. The present work is the result of his earnest attempt to reconcile these two great forces that have always played pivotal roles in shaping human destiny.

The Quest for the Spiritual Neuron is a bold and brilliantly creative attempt by an eminent Indian neuroscientist to reconcile reason and faith, science and religion. This work stands out as a distinguished contribution in more ways than one. It ranks as one of the most successful attempts by any Indian scientist to come to grips with the thorny problem of man's heritage and destiny. The author, although a neurosurgeon by profession, is practically a theologian and a philosopher as well. He believes that, in order to get a fuller and more accurate understanding of reality, we must incorporate science, especially biology, into our theology. In his view, "All theories of language, knowledge, spiritual revelations and persuasions require for their fullest understanding a biological epistemology" (117).

As a scientist the author's credentials are impeccable. He retired from the Christian Medical College, Vellore, as professor of neurosurgery and Chairman of the Department of Neurological Sciences. A former president of the Neurological Society of India, Jacob Abraham has delivered the Sachs Memorial Lectures at the prestigious Dartmouth Medical School in USA. As a believer he is moved by a genuine search for God. As a firm believer and an eminent neuroscientist, a pivotal position adopted by the author is that "faith requires the highest cognitive functions in man and utilizes a myriad of brain functions... We must incorporate biology into our theology" (116-117). With this vision as his guiding star, the author dives deep into the bottomless depths of the 'how' and 'why' of the universe and human existence. He breaks new ground on what is man and what is God: some of them he proves with hard evidence, others are just conjectures, though. The author puts together beautifully in a mega-synthesis things as complex and as varied as the Big Bang, the original Chaos, the immensely vast universe, the solar system, planet earth, neurons and the grey matter, past, present, future, infinity, biology, neurology, consciousness, thought, speech, languages, creativity, culture, gene, holistic maths, quantum physics, *māyā*, faith, love, redemption, resurrection, and eternity in his quest to find an answer to the question of the 'how' and 'why' of human beings and the universe.

The author clearly and brilliantly argues that the concept of a mere purposeless chance can never account for the existence of intelligent human beings on planet earth. Evolutionary modification of the human brain, culminating in its present form and status, is clearly the work of the

Supreme Being, the Creator God. Evolution took place with a purpose, viz., to produce beings that are capable of speech, creative thinking, and the ability to conceptualise a Spiritual Force or Supreme Being as the creator of the universe. The author visualizes this Supreme Spiritual Being or Spiritual Force as an extra-dimensional and formless energy. "Extra-dimensional" refers to the fact that this Spiritual Force exists outside the space-time cocoon. That is to say, this Spiritual Force does not require space for its existence, nor does it exist in time. Besides, this Supreme Energy, being extra-dimensional and formless, is not governed by the laws of nature.

This Supreme Spiritual Force, however, can enter and permeate throughout the universe. Entry is made possible because the borders of the universe are "fuzzy" or mathematically unstable. The author, applying models from quantum mechanics and holistic mathematics to the configuration of prefrontal neuronal maps, argues that it is possible for individuals to recognize inputs from this extra-dimensional energy or power, bypassing the five senses. He, then, proceeds to apply the Anthropic principle to the above conjecture and argues that, since finite human beings are unable to comprehend, love or worship an extra-dimensional and formless energy, it must be anthropomorphized if humans are to recognize it and experience it. "How does one worship a void, a vapour or a gaseous vertebrate?" asks the author. This is what has necessitated a Jesus or a Krishna. Humans can relate to the extra-dimensional formlessness only through such anthropomorphized forms of it.

While they anthropomorphize an extra-dimensional and formless Supreme Being, humans, of course, make a lot of distortions. With their limited intellectual powers and all the limitations of their language, how can they define the indefinable and describe the indescribable? Hence, imperfections will surely be there in human beings' understanding and description of the Supreme Spiritual Power in its anthropomorphized form. As a believer and a scientist the author has more than succeeded in explaining to modern humans in scientific terms what their heritage and destiny are. And for that reason the present work is, undoubtedly, a significant contribution to the new branch of knowledge, *neurotheology*.

Jose Thadavanal

Joseph Kaipayil, ***Human as Relational: A Study in Critical Ontology***, Gottigere, Bangalore: Jeevalaya Institute of Philosophy, 2003, pages xii + 62, ISBN 81-87664-03-7.

A budding theoretician in philosophical methodology, Dr. Joseph Kaipayil of Jeevalaya Institute of Philosophy continues to produce important as well as accessible works in Critical Ontology – a method and an ontology that he proposes to the world of methodical ontological thinking in philosophy. The present work is the sequel to his *Critical Ontology: An Introductory Essay* (published 1992; see review by V. F. Vineeth in *Journal of Dharma*, 28,2 [April-June 2003], 296-298), and it attempts to fulfil the promise he makes: that Critical Ontology as a method may be applied to any philosophical problem or discipline, and as a result we have a tenable and sound philosophy from its maieutic instrumentality. Thus, the first tangible daughter of the method has been a philosophical anthropology that never looses sight of the ontological (which he calls "ontic") and the ontic (which he calls "entic") in his attempt to synthesize both these in human.

Chapter one gives a critical ontological prerequisite for doing the critical ontology of human. Therein he summarizes the epistemic process or method of Critical Ontology as an ongoing, ever fresh, repetitive process of experience, analysis and postulation *ad libitum*. This part has already been discussed in detail in his previous work: *Critical Ontology: An Introductory Essay*.

Chapters two, three and four expatiate upon the fundamental triple-relationality that humans are by their very being: epistemic, ontic and ethic. Chapter two on the Epistemic Relationality of human, not only discusses cognition, consciousness, truth, meaning, etc., but also presents short but cogent arguments against representative anti-ontological fads that threaten to overthrow all sorts of ontologies, foundations, systematisations, etc. He takes care to place humans' aesthetic experience and the quasi-conscious feelings of animals within the framework of epistemic relationality.

Chapter three is on humans' Ontic Relationality. He begins by substituting the Heideggerian 'ontic' and 'ontological' with 'entic' and 'ontic', and proceeds to discuss his own critical ontological version of the concepts of existence, essence, difference, materiality, transmateriality (for which he gives the example of our thoughts, and calls them abstract entities!) (36) and God (the supreme Being-principle). He, then, moves on to study the human person as a somatic-psychic-pneumatic unity.

Chapter four is on humans' Ethic Relationality. Here he discusses the sense of cohumanity, human subjectivity and inter-subjectivity. It serves to systematically unify the moral with the factual side of human existence on earth.

The book is a concise introduction to his philosophy of the human. He has succeeded in embedding humans' epistemic and ethic relationality in their ontic relationality. The scope of the theme and method is vast. But due to his choice to limit the presentation of the material to its present small size, the book seems to suffer from a partial loss of the chance to really put forth the different concepts to the technically interested student of philosophy. For example, after having worked out the theoretical background to place the human as relational in the ontic, he has satisfied himself with discussing human in particular in just a few pages under the sub-title, The Human Person: A Somatic-Psychic-Pneumatic Unity (45-49). Although Chapter four, too, is on human, it does not directly deal with the ontic-anthropological but tries to integrate the ethical with the ontic-anthropological. It looks as though he has reserved a good bit of his philosophical reflections for future publications, satisfying himself with these introductory essays for the time being. Let us hope to read a more elaborate system in the form of a detailed work from this promising philosopher.

Raphael Neelamkavil

Francis Ferradez and **Jose Variekasseril**, eds., ***Mission: A Service of Love*** (Essays in honour of George Kottuppallil SDB), Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 1998, pages viii + 392, ISBN: 81-85408-00-22.

Mission: A Service of Love is an edited work. The book is a collection of thirty-seven scholarly articles, with the themes that are so bound up with the person and life of George Kottuppallil, a member of the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church. Being a historian, Kottuppallil has a deep consciousness of history that made him deeply dedicated to the cause of the Church, precisely to stand for the cause of the people in their contexts. The book is a tribute to his person and achievements, especially to his dedication to the contextualisation of the theological training and priestly formation in India. The various articles of the book look into the important disciplines of Christian formation, namely theology in response to the contextual issues, missiology and catechesis, inculturation and contextualisation, history and sociology. There are a few articles on Salesian charisma while others are reminiscences on George Kottuppallil, mostly by his close friends.

In the Indian context meaningful proclamation of Good News is possible only through dialogue. Dialogue presupposes a correct understanding of the church and the good news and realization of church as the kingdom of God for love and service. The word 'mission' is a wide and broad concept. In the background of the emergence of a new world and a new humanity, the church understands her new challenges in the mission of evangelisation. The colonial idea of 'exclusivism' in the concept of mission has given way to 'inclusivism'. So, she calls the present time as a period of New Evangelisation. These above said views of Paul Puthanangady introduce a critical and creative view in the entire concept of mission. The main thrust of his article is an invitation, to shift from institutionalised church centeredness to kingdom centeredness. Kingdom of God is a wider reality; it is a new world in which the love of God is translated into human love, which in its turn becomes the norm of life. The invitation of Puthanangady for a new evangelisation of the church hints at a confusion, novel trends and tensions that prevail in the church regarding mission and the need of bequeathing a spirit of genuine openness and dialogue.

"*New Orientations in Ecclesiology in Asia*," by Sebastian Karotemprel, looks into mission from an ecclesial perspective. Mission is a new way of being in the church. After a scriptural and historical survey on this concept, Karotemprel says that a new way of proclamation of the Gospel is a new way of being the church, namely, church as a faith community, church as *koinonia*, *ashram* community, dialogical community, kingdom of God, etc.

There are other articles that look at the concept of mission from scriptural dimensions, mission as reconciliation and peace, consecrated life and mission, mission among dalits, contetxtualized theology, empowering women after the model of Mary, etc.

Mission: A Service of Love, thus, beautifully sums up the life and person of George Kottuppallill, in relation to the mission and life of the church in India as a whole. Well-studied, deeply reflected and innovative articles of scholars make this book an important resource for theological studies in India.

Emmanuel Ayankudy

I. John Mohan Razu, ***On the Way to Critical Praxis*****:** ***Field Education as a Relevant Theological Pedagogy at the United Theological College, Bangalore***, Bangalore: United Theological College, 2002, pages 256.

In recent times we witness the earnest turning back of the scholarly world to the field of praxis-oriented theology. The relevance of such an approach is highly appreciated at all levels. It is a need of the hour to bring congruence between theological education and ministerial formation, especially at the bachelor level of theological studies (BD and BTh). This is what is exactly aimed at in this pioneering work, *On the Way to Critical Praxis: Field Education as Relevant Theological Pedagogy at the United Theological College, Bangalore*, edited by I. John Mohan Razu, who is a professor and chairperson of the Department of Theology and Ethics, and the former Dean of Field Education at the United Theological College, Bangalore, India. The editor's experience and competence in the field of education add colour and vitality to the work. It is a carefully crafted work and the book as a whole tries to bring out the rich theological insights of theory and practice.

The work under review has basically two parts. The first part deals with the theoretical reflections wherein the articles discuss about the field education programme held at the United Theological College, its background and the way it gradually evolved in the form of effective field education. The second part beautifully brings out the experimental reflection. It deals elaborately with the Indian social context into which the students are introduced and concrete issues they have to grapple with in the exercise of their ministry.

The world is the place where we meet God, because it is the place where God meets us in the person of Jesus Christ. The book deals with Field Education aimed at initiating the students into a systematic, critical and creative theological reflection in the Indian social context. A contextualised and praxis-oriented theology can originate only from an existential encounter with the concrete life situations of the people. In other words, the programmes aim at integrating the practical aspects of theological education into its ministerial programme. It is a two level action reflection programme which challenges us to broaden our horizons of thinking and involvement both in church and society. Further, it is envisaged that such a programme would motivate the students to be faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to be responsive to the contextual needs. In short, Field Education, being the primary focus of the whole book, enables the students to develop a critical praxis based on concrete life situations in order to shape a welcome emphasis in theological and ministerial perspectives.

Benzes Thomas

Jose Varikasseril and **Mathew Kariapuram, eds.,** ***Be My Witness*** (Essays in Honour of Dr. Sebastian Karotemprel SDB), Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 2001, pages viii + 300, ISBN: 81-85408-00-29.

This book is a collection of essays in honour of Sebastian Karotemprel, on the occasion of his 70th birthday by his collaborators, admirers, well-wishers and friends. The book contains twenty-five essays by different authors, two tributes and a long list of the bibliography of Prof. Karotemprel's contributions to the world of letters.

The essays in this book deal with a wide spectrum of topics related to Missiology, Scripture, Ecclesiology, Contextualisation, Sociology, Moral Theology, Liturgy, Catechism, Tribal Theology and Culture. They deal with some of the crucial issues that confront the Church in its endeavour to witness to the Gospel in India and beyond. They also try to help us see beyond the horizons of the present time, location and understanding in ministry and mission.

Of the twenty five articles, four deal with Scripture; there are another four articles on Ecclesiology, and another four on Missiology, three of them dealing with Sociological aspects; a set of three articles is on contextualisation, two on Liturgy, and yet another two articles on Catechesis; there is one each article on Theology of the Trinity, Tribal Theology and Moral Theology. Almost all these articles try to examine the efforts and struggles of the Indian Church in bearing witness to the Gospel.

Instead of attempting to review the whole text with so many titles, my present review shall focus only on a few articles that are interesting and closely related to the title of the book. The article titled "Discipleship and Mission in the Fourth Gospel: Philip as a Model Missionary," by Thomas Aerathedathu vividly presents the Johannine theology of discipleship and Missiology as a Christo-centric and Theo-centric process. Philip is depicted as the model disciple and missionary in the fourth Gospel. The author analyses the nature and role of a true disciple and missionary through the example of Philip. Gerald H. Anderson titles another interesting article "Mission at the Turn of the Twenty First Century." In the beginning of the article the author attempts to identify the historical sources from which the different Churches have come about and what has happened to them over the past century. Thus, he makes a very interesting retrospect and prospect with details of Christian mission all over the world. He also touches upon briefly the factors and forces, issues and challenges that will challenge and shape the Christian world mission in the 21st century. Finally, he proposes new networks and relationships among churches "marked by mutual respect, shared responsibility, reciprocity, and spiritual partnership with a sharing of personnel and resources, for the advancement of mission given to us by Christ, as partners in the Gospel (Phil 1:5)."

Another appealing essay is titled "Incarnation as Paradigm for Mission in Context" by Mathew Kariapuram. The essay makes a thorough study of the context of the Indian mission and proposes different ways of incarnating the mission in such a context. The general emphasis is on the solidarity with the subaltern people, who constitute the majority population in the country. Recalling the call of the *Redemtoris Missio*, "We are called to bear witness to Christ by taking courageous and prophetic stand in the face of oppressive forces of evil and by using our resources to serve the poorest of the poor (RM 42)," the author challenges the Church in India to make a thorough self-examination as to whether she really witness Christ and his Gospel values in her mission.

As the book is a collection of articles from a wide spectrum of topics which would cater to the interests of all sorts of readers, it can be highly recommended to students of theology, especially those interested in missiological studies.

Bitaju Puthenpurackal

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